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68 **HE SHALL OVERCOME**
Brilliant or brash? Eloquent civil rights leader or smart-mouthed punk? Architect of a reborn NAACP chapter…or pawn of the ultra conservatives? Explain Christopher Smitherman. Please.
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A writer puts away the cell phone, disconnects from the Internet, ignores e-mail, and lives like it's 1995. It lasted a week. It felt like eternity.
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BURGER HEAVEN

We ate 'em plain, we ate 'em fancy. We ordered them topped with jalapeño mayo, poached eggs, goetta, and wine sauce. We chowed down in dives, dining rooms, and mom-and-pop shops. Then we ranked the 40 best burgers in town. And we're pretty sure you'll be surprised by No. 1. Plus: immaculate fries, meatless marvels, the secrets of a hamburger god, and the ascent of the Slider.

CHEESEBURGER IN PARADISE
The Black Angus burger from Daveed's, accompanied by truffle Parmigiano fries.

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN KURTZ

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JULY 2010

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COVER: Photograph by Ryan Kurtz; retouching by Patrick White.

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ONLINE

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To read our cover story on online, you'll need this month's access code: **BURGER**

Quotable Notables

Read Kathy Y. Wilson's Q&A with fiber artist Carolyn Mazloomi, curator of *Textural Rhythms: Constructing the Jazz Tradition—African American Quilts*.

Catch Up

In April, the Creation Museum welcomed its 1 millionth visitor, and in May celebrated its third birthday by dedicating new "Knee-High Museum" exhibits for the youngest visitors. *Cincinnati Magazine* was present at the creation, as it were, and you can go to our website to read Jason Cohen's June 2005 "In Genesis They Trust," which looked at Answers in Genesis, the organization behind the museum. There are other stories about the museum there, too, including Linda Vaccariello's "And On the Sixth Day, God Created Paleontologists" and "A Night at the Creation Museum," by Gregg Martini and Justin Green.

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Contributors

Aiesha D. Little

Senior Associate Editor **AIESHA D. LITTLE** found out a few things when she vowed to spend a week using little to no technology for "Give My Regards to Facebook" (page 72). She agreed to forgo the use of an assortment of items, including DVDs, her home computer, and her cell phone. The most difficult part? "Realizing I have no way to decompress that doesn't involve my computer," she says. "Because of that, I may have been a bit snippy with a few people during my week off the grid. Consider this my public apology."

Kathy Y. Wilson

In her profile of Cincinnati's controversial NAACP Chapter President Christopher Smitherman ("He Shall Overcome," page 68), contributing editor **KATHY Y. WILSON** left no stone unturned. Her meticulous research draws on a remarkable array of Cincinnatians, including former prosecutor Mike Allen, CPS Board President Eileen Cooper Reed, and even a local barber. "Black folks in public service are complicated, and there are historical contexts to consider, especially with men like Smitherman," Wilson says. "But most people aren't that deep. I am probably the only one who sits around thinking about W.E.B. Du Bois, Obama, and the Tea Party when I contemplate Smitherman."

Donna Covrett

Rounding up the city's best burgers is a daunting task, but Dining Editor **DONNA COVRETT** led the staff's charge for "Burger Heaven" (page 52), discovering in the process that mastering this classic nosh is trickier than it seems. In fact, don't underestimate the need for proper cooking, Covrett says. "Even really fine prime beef can die in the hands of a complacent or untrained cook. As ubiquitous as it is, a really great burger is not as easy to find as I imagined it would be."

Hawk Krall

Philadelphia-based artist **HAWK KRALL**'s creative process is painstakingly detailed: Each illustrated burger in "Burger Heaven" (page 52) is the product of initial sketches of the separate ingredients followed by a rough pencil sketch of the whole burger. Then, after redrawing the image onto heavier paper, Krall painted them in gouache and did the linework in ink. He opted for paint over Photoshop in order to "really capture the texture of the burgers and rolls and french fries," he says. In addition to writing and illustrating a weekly column about hot dogs for Seriouseats.com, Krall's work has appeared in *Willamette Week*, *The Village Voice*, and *Las Vegas Weekly*.

LEFT PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN KURTZ

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Home & Garden Resource Guide

From gardening in clay soil to designing with "Cincinnati style," learn what every local homeowner needs to know.

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A Growing Passion

8 simple steps for creating the garden of your dreams.

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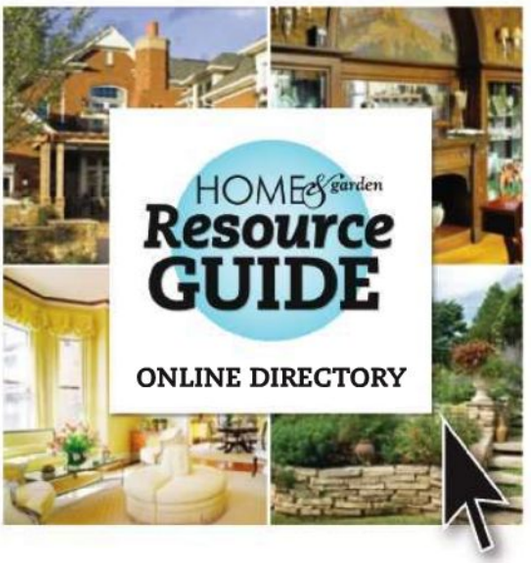

THE ONLINE DIRECTORY

Our annual listing of home and garden professionals moves online this year. Search our database at **cincinnatimagazine.com/hgrg** to find your personal team of home-improvement experts: builders, architects, landscapers, interior designers, subcontractors and much more!

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ON THE HOME & GARDEN RESOURCE GUIDE COVER: Photos by Ryan Kurtz, Daylight Photo and Gary Kessler.

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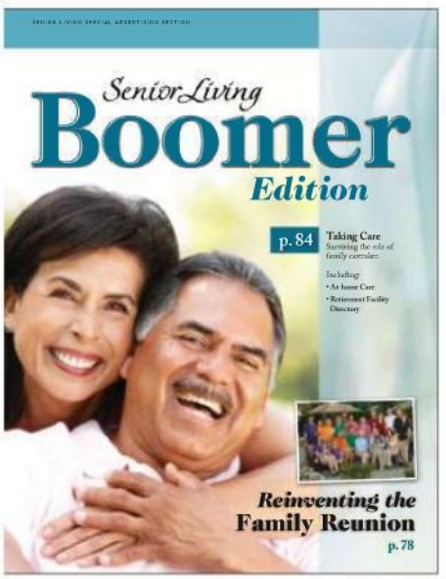

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Letter from the Editor

Was it Plato or Kierkegaard who so eloquently asked: Where's the beef? The answer would seem to be: Right here in Cincinnati, baby! Yes, we are known more as a chili town, but by God, we've got some darn good hamburger makers around here. Realizing that they hadn't had their day in the sun—at least in our pages—in quite some time, we decided to venture out into the community, hunt down and arduously taste the many different species of grilled meat sandwich, and compile a list of the best.

Everyone on the editorial staff was mobilized for this task. More than 50 establishments were visited and assessed, and I'd wager that all told just as many pounds were gained. In the end, we settled on 40 worthy purveyors, some of whom have taken the art and science of the hamburger—and in the best cases, you definitely find an alchemical mix of both—to new heights. Undoubtedly there will be those among you who will have not heard of some of these places, who will scratch your heads or let out a flabbergasting *"What?!!!"* when you lay eyes on our list. Let me just say now: That is OK. We welcome your disagreements, your disputations, your *cris de coeur*. Send us your tired, hungry e-mails, send up smoke signals, or send a good, old-fashioned hand-written letter and let us know what we got right, what we got wrong, and any place we missed. We come to praise our local burgers, not bury them in obscurity. Any intel you can provide we will act on. Just not right away. We've got to work off the poundage first.

Beyond the burgers (and Kathy Y. Wilson's deeply researched "explanation" of the ways and means of local NAACP chapter president Christopher Smitherman; and Aiesha D. Little's wry diary of going a week without anything remotely digital in her life; and Jack Heffron's column on the Gamble House kerfuffle), there's something else I need to tell you about. In June, we were recognized by three different organizations for our superb editorial and design work. *Cincinnati Magazine* racked up 12 prizes at the Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards (including seven first place honors, four second place honors, and the "Best Magazine in Ohio" for the third year in a row); seven awards from the Greater Cincinnati Society of Professional Journalists (including two firsts—one for trend reporting with "Welcome to the Outer Limits" last August, and one in the arts and entertainment category for "The Ballad of Chuck and Lisa" by Jason Cohen last December); and we received the General Excellence Award in our circulation category (in addition to seven other nominations—including one for Dining Editor Donna Covrett for food and dining writing, and four for Art Director Grace E. Saunders for design) at the City and Regional Magazine Association's annual conference. I couldn't be more proud of everyone on our staff, not only for the quality of their work but for their commitment during a very trying year throughout the country and in the media industry in particular. When it comes to doing our best, we don't (and won't) let up. Thanks for sticking with us.

Jay Stowe
Editor

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"Soap Floats," by Jack Heffron

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"He Shall Overcome," by Kathy Y. Wilson

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"Give My Regards to Facebook," by Aiesha D. Little

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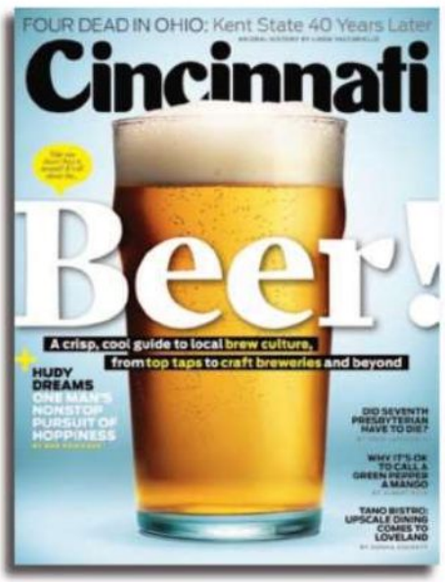

Feedback

> Our past and future are inseparable from barley and hops. Maybe a Hudepohl tap in City Council Chambers would remind everyone how Cincinnati gets it done!

This Round's on Us

A big hearty "Prosit!" to Bob Driehaus's brilliant article about the reemergence of vintage Cincinnati beer brands ["Hudy Dreams," May]. It brought back many fond memories of my youth in Finneytown when my dad would take me along on beer runs to pick up cases of Hudepohl, Burger, and even Top Hat at our local drive-thru. He would load up the trunk with his empty cases (returnable bottles—what a lost concept!), drive in, and pop the trunk. The clerk knew the drill: Replace the empty cases with full ones, close the trunk, and give Dad the bill. Never Budweiser, Coors, or Miller—only Cincinnati brews.

Through this lesson in beer choices, my father taught me about the importance of brand loyalty, especially for hometown products, because our purchases would help the local economy. After all, he is a P&G lifer—and never dared to stray from their brands, either. As his P&G stock grew, so did his beer tastes, which meant he later splurged on Christian Moerlein. Those were good times!

Dan Okenfuss
Sacramento

Vine Street may divide the city physically, the streetcar may divide the city philosophically, and the casino may divide the city morally, but even Bearcats and Muskies can agree that beer goes hand-in-hand with Cincinnati. Greg Hardman's efforts to return the historic Hudepohl brands to Cincinnati are bolstered by new entries in the local brewing scene.

Our past and future are inseparable from our fascination with and dedication to barley and hops. I enjoyed the nostalgic look back at the brewery history in Cincinnati, and even more so, the possibilities of a return to the glory days of downtown brewing. Maybe a Hudepohl tap in City Council Chambers would remind everyone how Cincinnati gets it done!

Brian Smyth
Hyde Park

Let's Hear It for Hal

I am a reporter with the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and was so happy to get the April issue and see a story on Hal McCoy ["Game Changer," by Sridhar Pappu, April]. I have always been inspired by his work and just as much by his attitude toward reporting. He exemplifies the meaning of good rapport. He treated his sources with respect, took what they did seriously, and asked that back in return. He is an incredible talent. It saddens me, the current state of journalism, and while the higher-ups say these cutbacks are necessary, I'm not always sure that's true. If you take what shines out of your newspaper—if you don't invest in it—it all fades away, eventually. Good luck in whatever you do, Hal! Thank you for your dedication.

Carrie Whitaker
Over-the-Rhine

Remembering Kent State

The retrospective on the shootings at Kent State really resonated with me ["May Day," by Linda Vaccariello, May]. As someone who grew up in Northern Ohio but is too young to have memories of the tragedy, my perspective on May 4, 1970, was mostly shaped by what I read in history books. Reading the first-hand accounts of that day provided great context and insight on the events that lead up to the shootings. Thank you for telling that story in an unconventional way.

John Whitmer
Over-the-Rhine

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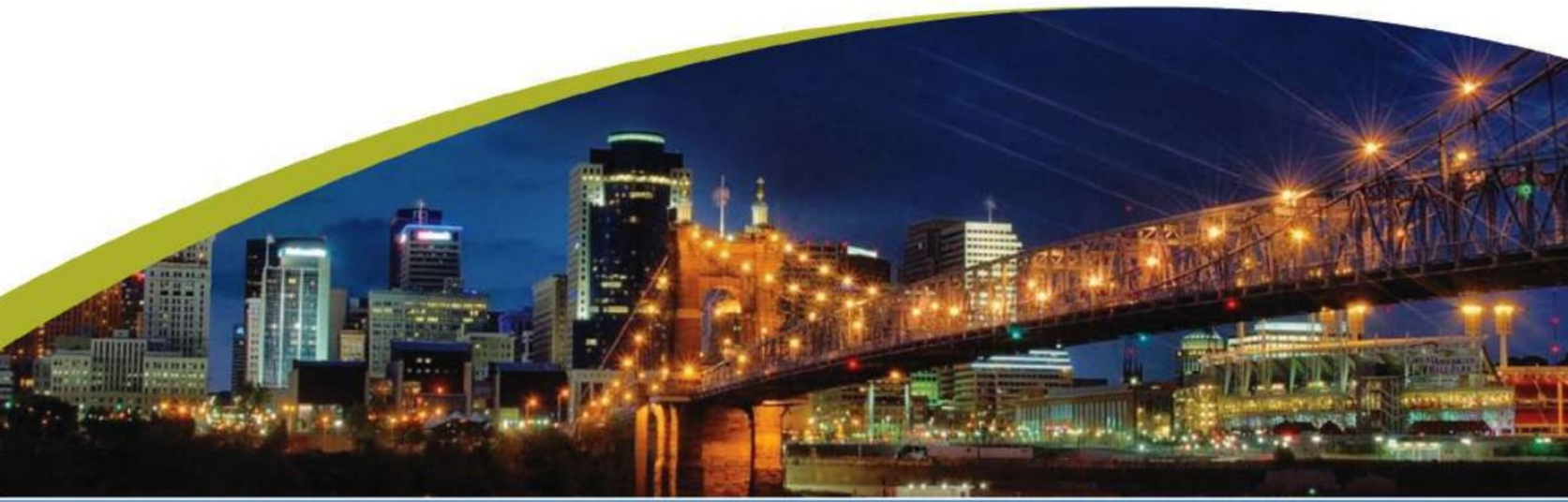

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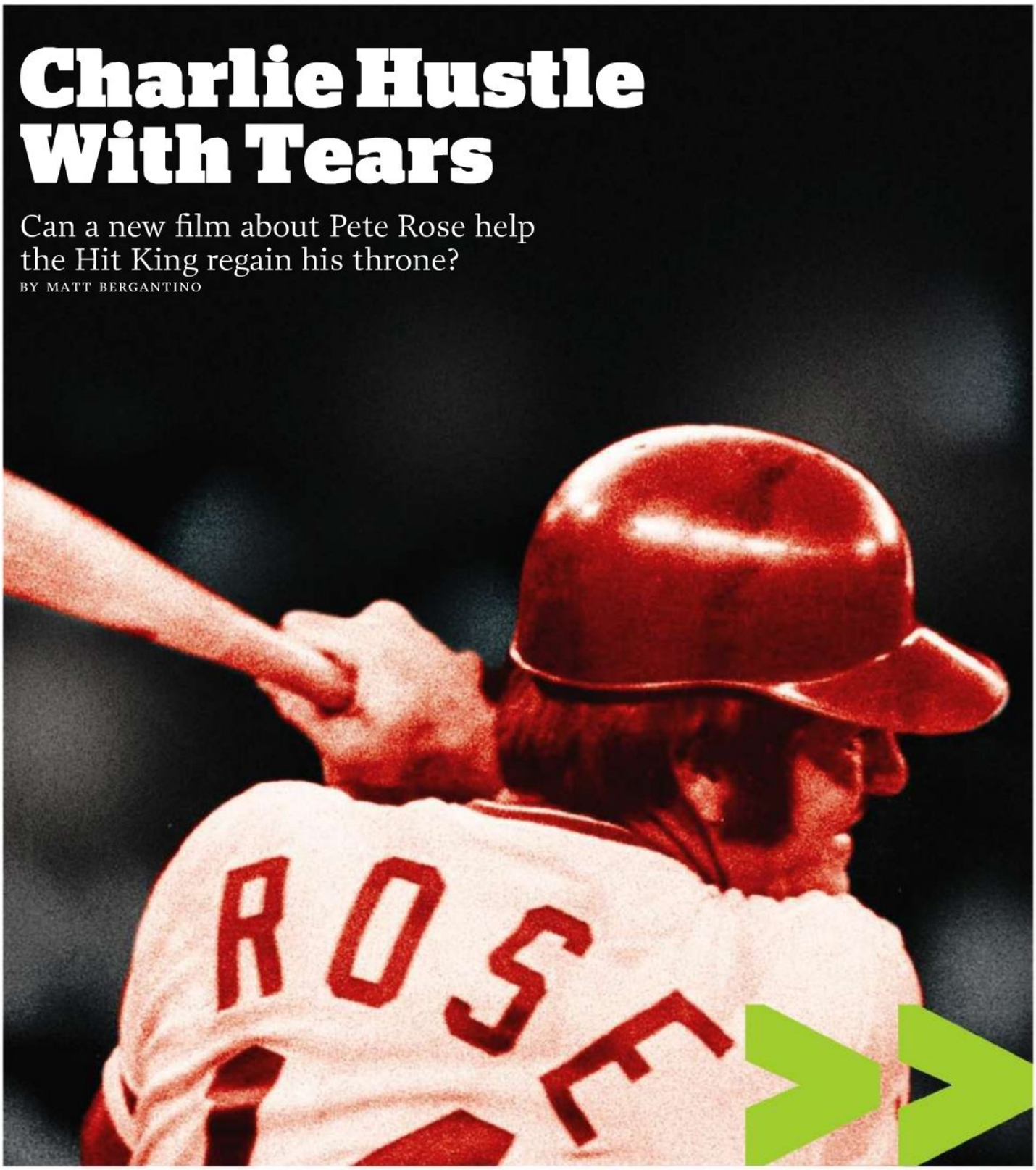
Charlie Hustle With Tears

Can a new film about Pete Rose help the Hit King regain his throne?

BY MATT BERGANTINO



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY BARKING FISH ENTERTAINMENT

"If Pete Rose was your uncle, these would be the kinds of stories he'd tell at family barbecues." —Frontlines 22

"Stanley Schrotel, the chief of police, gathered us all here and said, 'Play golf!' We couldn't believe it." —Being There 24

"Today's chicken fanciers, who tend to be Martha Stewart acolytes, never let the sun set on their chicken droppings." —Dr. Know 26

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LONG LIVE THE KING

A Theater Near You

4192 premieres July 7 in Los Angeles and opens regionally at AMC Newport on the Levee on July 14. You can buy tickets online at www.4192movie.com

The Crying Game

"You never know what to expect from fans," Rose says. "I knew I was going to break the record, but I didn't expect a nine-minute standing ovation. The Cincinnati fans broke me down. It takes a lot to break me down. I'm different emotionally than most. I'm a tough son of a bitch. I don't think seven minutes woulda done it."

Not Us

"Baseball might not like this movie 'cause it shows me in a good light," says Rose. "I hope they like it, but they may not. But when you get down to it, [the film] is all about the game. I mean, you can apologize for 20 years but it doesn't do any good. And besides, who wants to hear more of that?"

In June 1970, nearly two decades before former Major League Baseball commissioner Bart Giamatti brought the hammer down on one of the sport's greatest players, Pete Rose placed a bet that he remembers fondly today. On that June morning, Rose bet Tony Perez $150 that he would be the first player to use the toilets at the new Riverfront Stadium. To clinch this dubious title, Rose exhibited his legendary hustle. He arrived at Riverfront at 11 a.m.—eight hours before the 7 p.m. game against the Atlanta Braves—and beat Perez by 15 minutes. "[Perez] was turning the corner and I had already finished up," Rose laughs during a phone interview from Las Vegas, where he has made a cottage industry of signing sports memorabilia for fans. This story, like so many others told by or about Pete Rose, is an artifact from a time when all anybody ever said about the man was, *Damn, that guy loves to play baseball.*

This month, a new documentary film hopes to remind people about *that* Pete Rose, the one who lined a single to left-center field on September 11, 1985, and surpassed legendary Hall of Famer Ty Cobb. Director Terry Lukemire, an Amelia native who grew up watching the Reds in their prime, says he made *4192: The Crowning of the Hit King* to remind people that there was such a time. "It's mind-boggling where he falls in the game, statistically," Lukemire says from his office at Barking Fish Entertainment, the artist-owned production company in Covington that made the film. "People are shocked when they see the footage and see, either again or for the first time, what a great player he really was."

And yet it is possible, in light of all the controversy that surrounds Rose—including recent allegations that bats he commissioned for his record-breaking 1985 season may have been corked—to forget what made him great. After Rose broke the record, he went on to make another 64 hits before he retired in 1986. And from 1984 to 1989 he managed the Reds to four consecutive second place finishes. But in early 1989, rumors began to swirl that Rose—whose gambling habit was a well-known secret—had bet not only on baseball, but on the very team he was managing. By that summer, the evidence against Rose was overwhelming; John Dowd, special counsel to the commissioner of baseball, found betting slips and checks containing Rose's fingerprints, handwriting, and signature. The staggering accusations included a reported gambling habit of at least *$10,000 a day* on baseball during the 1987 season.

Rose Bud Before Charlie Hustle there was the unsullied Pete, shown here during spring training of his rookie year, 1963.

On August 24, 1989, came Giamatti's shocking announcement—Pete Rose was banished from the game—which was followed by nearly 15 years of Rose's inexplicable denials. Remember, Rose didn't own up to his gambling habit until his second autobiography, *My Prison Without Bars,* published in 2004. For many, it was too little, too late. Rose's reputation had been permanently tarnished, and he had become something far less than one of the greatest players of all time.

Enter *4192,* a love letter to "Charlie Hustle," the man who now exists only as archival footage, batting stats, Aqua Velva commercials, and lots and lots of sto-

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY BARKING FISH ENTERTAINMENT

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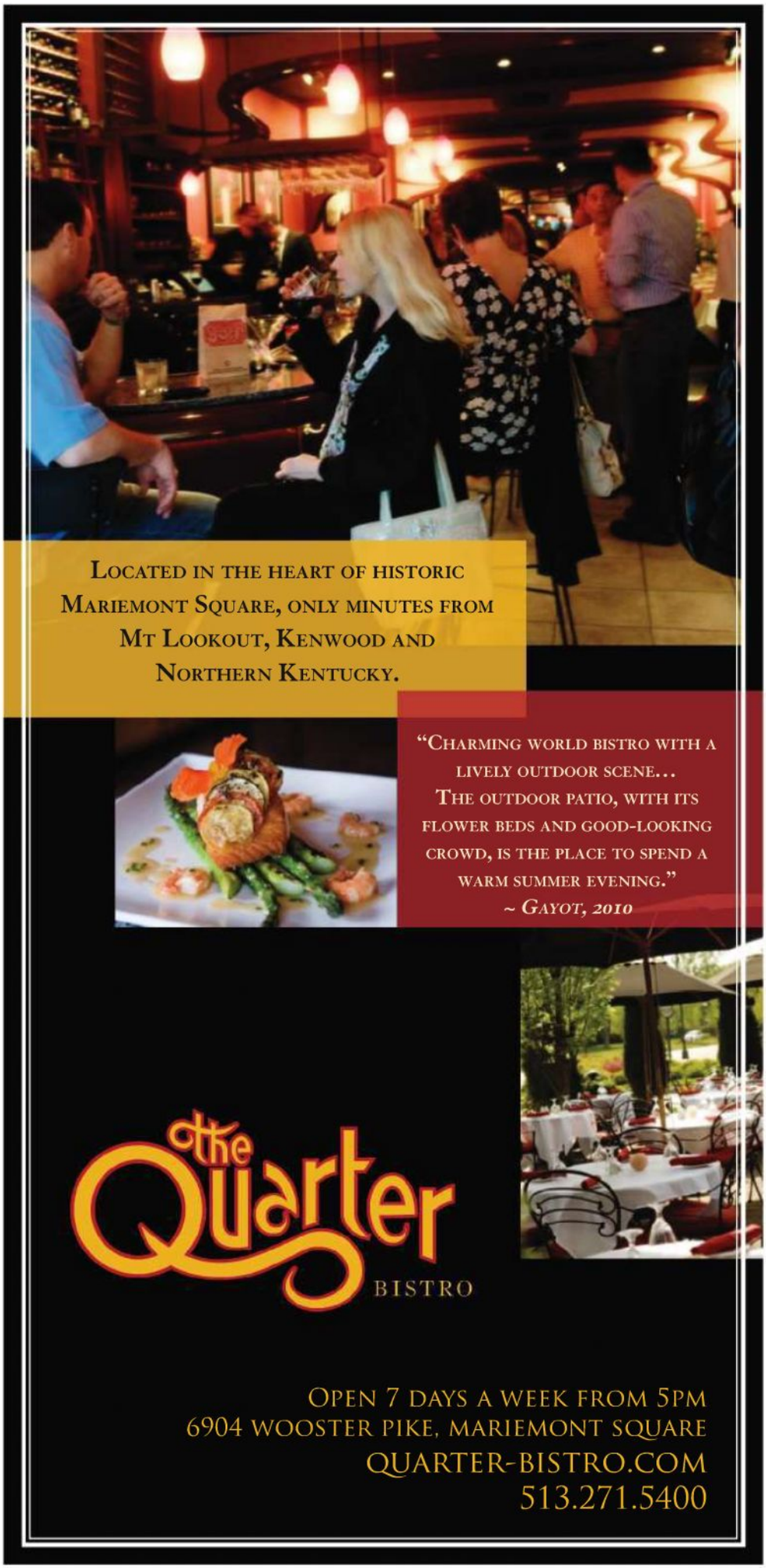
ries. Lukemire conducted more than 25 hours of interviews with Rose, who was all too happy to focus on his accomplishments. "What else can you say about the controversy, about what I did wrong? It's yesterday's news," Rose says. For him, the thrill of a great game is what baseball's all about—and he and his teammates were great entertainers. "Sparky [Anderson] put a whale of an entertaining team together. [The Big Red Machine] had everything you needed as a fan," he says.

Much of the film features Rose speaking directly into the camera. First, he gives you the numbers—the Reds won two World Series, four National League pennants, and six division titles. Then come the stories. Like: It was raining the day before Game 5 of the 1975 World Series against Boston. The Reds, all in uniform, are on a bus driving to Tufts University to practice indoors. Sparky pulls over to ask a gas station attendant for directions. An hour later they're still lost and realize the gas station attendant was a Boston fan.

And Rose still can't resist a good dig. Three-time All Star Lee May, who played for the Reds from 1965 to 1971, was a hell of a slugger but terrible in the field. "Everybody else said 'I've got it.' Lee would say 'Who wants it?'" Pete recalls in a voiceover, cackling as if May were still out there, squinting against the sun, not catching balls.

If Pete Rose was your uncle, these would be the kinds of stories he'd tell at family barbecues. And while there's nothing strictly new here, the film features extensive interviews with Rose's teammates, guys like Mike Schmidt and Tony Perez, plus insights from people who know Rose well, like Marty Brennaman. "[The film's] important because there's a generation or more of fans that don't have a recollection of Pete and the kind of career he carved out for himself on the baseball field," the Reds broadcaster says. "Especially in this city, where he was born and raised and played, I think people should see a guy who, if he had three hits in a game, he wanted five. Not too many players like that. Good was never good enough for him."



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Being There

Bob Krueger

Fifty years ago, four average citizens decided to carve their own golf course out of a rolling farm on the west side. Today, Miami View Golf Club is one of this city's hidden gems. Bob Krueger, a retired schoolteacher who joined before the first hole was dug, reflects back on the club's working-man heritage.

I think it was '59. One day I was looking at a bulletin board—at, well, let me be honest with you, a bar—and I saw this flyer that said: "Interested in building a golf course?" So I went to a meeting, and there was a group of maybe 20, 30 guys, talking. They said they had the land, but the big thing was they needed people.

So I went home to my wife Julie and I said I'd like to join this golf club for $300, and she said, "Bob, we don't have $300"—we had six kids at the time. But I came up with my $300, and I said, "Gee whiz, I'm gonna go up and see what I just bought!" Me and a guy named Jerry Lorenz took a ride up this little muddy road past 128. All I saw was locust trees, a couple lakes, a lot of hills and valleys—just an old farm. But we walked all around and Jerry said, "Bob, this is going to be a golf course."

We came up with enough money to buy a front loader, and hard-working men got out here and did a lot of the work themselves. Then all at once, I think in 1961, a guy named Stanley Schrotel, the chief of police of Cincinnati, gathered us all out here and said, "Play golf!" We couldn't believe it.

I have the highest respect for the Kenwoods, the Camargos—but those were the people of leisure. You know, everything had to be about the dinner and the cocktails and all that was synonymous with golf and tennis. The old school teacher, the hard-nosed real estate guy—he had to go out and make a living. But we said, "Darn it, we deserve this too." It was very congested at public courses, and we were tired of standing in line. I don't mind having my cold beer out by the shed. That's fine. My hotdog. But I wanted a place where I could come out and they say, "Bob, you have a starting time at 9 o'clock at Miami View. And your wife and your children can play."

—BRENT DONALDSON

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WILLIS

VITAL STATS

Leader Board
"Best round I ever shot here was a 69, back in my early days," Krueger says. "In fact, I had two 69s. I was fortunate to be club champion twice, but I was just a young greenhorn. I never had a lesson in my life because I could never afford lessons."

It's In the Hole!
"I guess the most difficult hole on the course would be number 14. It was once somewhere in the newspaper, they were trying to decide the toughest holes in Cincinnati, and they had number 14 at Miami View. It's a long par going uphill to a green—very sloping."

Hey Coach!
After teaching at Oak Hills, Krueger began teaching at LaSalle High School, where he taught golf and in 1961 became the head coach of the school's first football team.

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Your Q.C. Conundrums, Answered

Dr. Know

Which came first in the Bluegrass State? What's with all the basement commodes? Chickens? In the city?!

Is Kentucky called the Bluegrass State because of the music? Or is the music called bluegrass because of Kentucky?

—Botanically Challenged

Dear Challenged:

The grass was first. Early visitors to the central Kentucky savannah swore that if you squinted in just the right way in the crepuscular hours on days when the native grass was in bud, there was something of a blue tinge to the scenery. The Doctor has spent considerable time partying fairly seriously in and around Lexington, an activity frequently leading to squint-inducing post-event physical trauma around sunrise. Even so, he has never seen that blue tinge and has never met anyone he trusts who has seen it. But that's the deal with the grass. The Commonwealth was called the Bluegrass State long before there were cowboy hats or radio, both of which contributed significantly to the success of the musical subgenre we call bluegrass. It would be wrong, it is necessary to add, to credit Lexington as the birthplace of bluegrass music. That honor goes to the sleepy town of Rosine, which birthed Bill Monroe, and eventually, the Blue Grass Boys. In the Doctor's experience, the native music in Greater Lexington is boozy renderings of pre-Beatles rock mixed with a little—even boozier—Stephen Foster.

We're house-hunting in one of the city's older neighborhoods. Nearly every home that we've looked at has a toilet in the basement. Not a bathroom, mind you: just a toilet. Was this required by some early 20th century building code?

—First-Time Buyers

Dear Buyers:

If you do buy one of those early 20th-century Cincinnati houses, you will find yourself very grateful very quickly for that basement water closet, even though it may be an agoraphobe's nightmare, sitting as it likely does in full view of the coal closet and the workbench. Because that same early 20th-century house is almost certainly not going to have more than one genuine bathroom, and today's busy Americans have no time to wait around for available space.

Code, however, had nothing to do with the basement bowl. Remember that when the house was built, indoor plumbing was still considered a modern advancement, particularly in inexpensive dwellings, and the buyer was expected to be grateful to have one full and complete inside bathroom. Two-career couples were unheard of in those days, so there was no such thing as equal bathroom rights. Father had first crack at the facilities before going to work to pay for the swell bathroom, and then everybody else had his turn. Or hers. Oh, the Doctor misses those days.

But that extra loo behind the furnace was not designed to, as it were, relieve the pressure on the rest of the family while the paterfamilias laboriously edged those muttonchop whiskers. Our beloved late Auntie Alice—our window into the unself-conscious mind of early 20th-century Cincinnati and a woman whose comments about the slow pace of the foursome ahead of her on the second green could be heard from the sixteenth hole—explained to us that the basement

ILLUSTRATION BY LARS LEETARU / (OPPOSITE) PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN KURTZ

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convenience was actually there for the help. Well, actually, she said laundress. And we believe she was correct.

My neighbor just announced he's putting a chicken coop in his backyard! I hate to make a fuss, but—won't it smell?

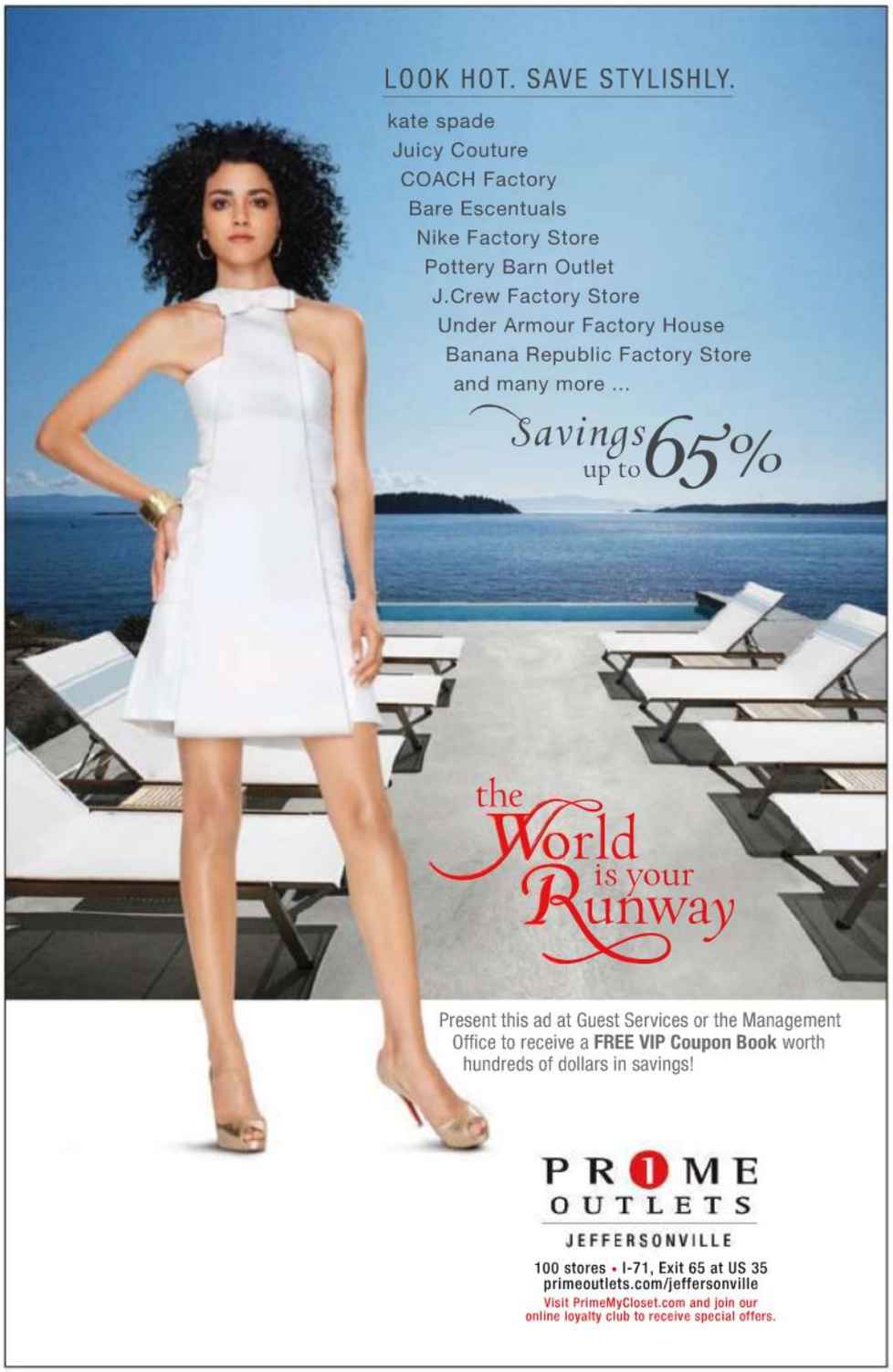
—Likes Fresh Eggs as Much as the Next Guy, But…

Dear Likes:

Congratulations. You live in an enlightened, poultry-welcoming city and not in one of those boneheaded municipalities where chickens are officially believed to be harmful to the fake Georgian and ChemLawn aesthetic and associated Real Estate Values and are therefore zoned out. Chickens, as long as there is no self-important rooster in the mix, are quiet and pleasant neighbors, always doing their bit to rid the community of bothersome bugs, always happy to lay an egg to start your day out right, and perfectly willing to be turned into fricassee when the egg mechanism at last shuts down. Whether that coop smells has far less to do with the chickens than it does with your neighbor. It takes a great deal of accumulated bug- and grain-based chicken dung to reek on a level of offensiveness comparable to that of accumulated horsemeat-based dog poop, a substance that for some reason is perfectly acceptable to zoning boards. Today's chicken fanciers, who tend to be Martha Stewart acolytes, never let the sun set on their chicken droppings.

And the Doctor does not believe for a minute that you hate to make a fuss, or you would not be taking the time to write a meddling letter to The Authority.

Dr. Know is Albert Pyle. He is not a real doctor, but he is executive director of the Mercantile Library. Curious about the city's peculiarities? Submit your question by mail or e-mail Dr. Know at drknow@cincinnatimagazine.com.



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What's Happening 07/10

1 HIDDEN HARPER Renowned Cincinnati-based minimal realist Charley Harper captured nature's vast essence in two dimensions. But behind his iconic images is a wealth of work never shown to the public—until now. Harper's rare paintings, collages, and works on paper make their debut at ***Charley Harper: Previously Unseen Originals.*** **July 15–Aug 28** *at Phyllis Weston Gallery*

2 DRAG QUEEN CITY A straight line never wins in ***Gay Bingo,*** where the bingo cards are musical-inspired and intermission features outrageous drag shows. So bring your fiercest drag attire and your "tease-it-to-Jesus" hair, but don't bring grandma. **July 18** *at Ensemble Theatre*

3 INDIE-PENDENTS DAY Celebrate The Fourth Northside-style at the annual ***Northside Rock 'N Roll Carnival.*** The indie-flavored fete dishes live music, circus freaks, drag shows, and the notorious beer garden. Get ready to rock. **July 2 & 3** *at Jacob Hoffner Park*

4 MIMÍ'S LAST STAND Puccini's ***La Bohème*** delivers a passionate performance of love and loss amidst 1930s Paris, presented by the Cincinnati Opera as the season's grand finale and featuring the Cincinnati Boychoir. **July 21, 23 & 25** *at Music Hall*

5 THUNDER CLAP As ***Lightning Bolt*** fans well know, there's a method to the bass-and-drum duo's madness. With precision synchronicity, Brian Gibson and Brian Chippendale deliver a pulsating, thrashing performance packed with plenty of moshing, head-banging, and barely controlled chaos. You've been warned. **July 21** *at Southgate House*

6 ORIGINAL SIN CITY In ***Vegas 360,*** Cincinnati-based photographer Thomas Schiff's sweeping, 360-degree snapshots envelop viewers in the glimmer and sin of the nation's most notorious playground. Feel the decadence. **Thru Sept 26** *at Cincinnati Art Museum*

MAJOR IN MINORS Youth performers hail from all corners of the globe for ***The World Piano Competition,*** where Beethovens-in-training compete through performances of classics and are judged by an international jury. **July 11–18** *at Cincinnati Art Museum and Aronoff Center for the Arts*

7 8 POPS PROPS ***Moeller High School's 50th Anniversary celebration*** brings the Cincinnati Pops' Hollywood movie–themed music, fireworks, Cincinnati food favorites, and plenty of "celebration" beverages. **July 24** *at Moeller High School*

9 IN NAME ONLY Artist Mary Louise Holt's exhibition ***The Great Ohio Wilderness and Its Native People*** depicts this region's original Native American culture with paintings of wildlife, landscapes, and indigenous people. **Thru August 27** *at Lloyd Library and Museum*

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(ō-vər-¦draft) n.: an act of overdrawing at a bank; the state of being overdrawn; also, the sum overdrawn

The Takeaway

Are overdraft fees really going away?

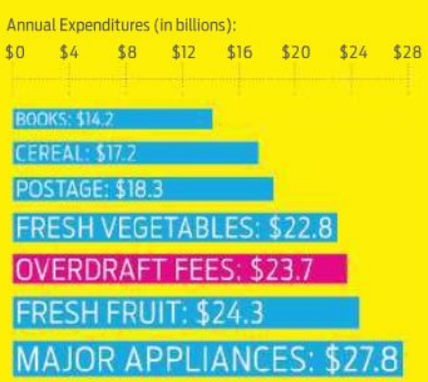
When does a $12 bottle of wine cost $39? When the buyer uses a debit card, runs short of funds, and gets stuck paying a $27 overdraft fee—or much more. It's easy to unwittingly rack up hundreds of dollars in overdraft fees when you make more than one debit card purchase or automated teller machine (ATM) withdrawal in a day. And it's not uncommon for banks to charge additional overdraft fees on accounts that are overdrawn *because* of overdraft fees, and then add to those fees every day the account is overdrawn. Yep, we hear you loud and clear: *Arrrgggghhhh*.

But a new Federal Reserve rule will curb this: Regulation E of the Electronic Fund Transfer Act stipulates that, starting July 1, financial institutions can no longer charge fees for overdrafts resulting from ATM withdrawals or one-time debit card transactions on new accounts, unless that consumer has consented to the overdraft service (and therefore, those pesky fees). For existing customers, the rule takes effect August 15.

So I won't have to pay fees for overdrafts anymore? Not for transactions initiated with an ATM or debit card. In fact, one of the goals of the regulation is keeping you from overdrafting your account in the first place. If you don't specifically opt in for overdraft service, then you won't be allowed to withdraw more by ATM or debit card transaction than you have in the bank. Your purchase or withdrawal will simply be denied. However, take note: The new rule doesn't apply to checks or automatic bill payments made using your checking account—they can still rack up fees if an overdraft occurs.

BAD MONEY AFTER GOOD

>> A 2009 report issued by the Center for Responsible Lending documented the amount of money Americans were spending on overdraft fees in comparison to common household items. The sad news: Americans annually spent more on overdraft fees than they did on fresh vegetables, but slightly less than they did on fresh fruit.



Shouldn't we just be more responsible? Of course. One of the primary laws of personal finance is you shouldn't spend more than you have. But in recent years, many banks have automatically put consumers in overdraft programs that don't alert them that they're overdrawing their account. They just allow the purchase, *then* charge a fee. And those who incur the most fees are often those who have the least money, a 2008 FDIC survey of automated overdraft programs found. Indeed, according to that study, customers with more than 10 overdraft transactions in a 12-month period accounted for 84 percent of overdraft fees charged by banks in the United States in 2006. More telling: 75 percent of banks automatically enrolled customers in these overdraft programs, and in some cases, customers were not given the choice to opt out of the automated program.

Marilyn Mocilnikar, senior vice president and director of retail products and delivery at Fifth Third Bank, notes that up until, well, now, Fifth Third customers have been automatically opted in to the program—a program which relied on a computer system known internally (and somewhat ominously) as "the matrix." Bank customers could opt out of it by request only—except that, in reality, they couldn't, because the matrix wasn't programmed to allow it. "Previously we did not have a systematic way of capturing a customer's overdraft coverage preference," Mocilnikar says.

Are the new regulations really a big deal? They are, especially to the banks. While the rules may go a long way toward improving customers' attitudes toward their bank, those good feelings aren't going to make up for the banking industry's lost revenue. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, banks and credit unions collected *nearly $24 billion* in overdraft fees in 2008.

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Stephanie Honan, Fifth Third's assistant public relations manager, estimates that the impact of the new rule will result in losses of "about $20 million a quarter, with about $10 to $15 million realized in the third quarter and the full run-rate of $20 million impact in the fourth."

It'll impact customers, too. As the FDIC study reveals, median overdraft fees are $27 each, yet 41 percent of overdrafts are debit card transactions for a median amount of only $20—which means that the fee is often greater than the purchase itself. Of course, banks will have to make up those fees somewhere, likely through fees on other services, such as overdraft protection that allows customers to link their checking account with a savings account, credit card, or line of credit to cover transactions in the event of an overdraft. Example: Fifth Third Early Access offers a short-term form of credit with an annual percentage rate of 120 percent. In other words, before signing up for a new service, do your homework. Honan also advises that customers use account-monitoring tools such as Internet banking, text alerts, and e-mail alerts to stay aware of balances and avoid overdrawing them.

Good idea. But this is all pretty confusing. What's an upstanding citizen who wants to avoid overdrafting his or her account supposed to do? You have until August 15 to opt in with your bank's overdraft coverage. If you do, one piece of good news is that banks will no longer be able to raise fees willy-nilly, as they have in the past. If you don't, you will be automatically opted out—which, in practical terms, means you will be denied a debit card purchase or ATM withdrawal if you don't have the funds to back it.

Banks are contacting customers in myriad ways to inform them of the changes. What you do is up to you. But keep in mind: If you do nothing, it might save you money you didn't know you didn't have.

—MELISSA DAVIS HALLER

FEE SIMPLE?

>> On August 6, 2008, the Consumer Federation of America released a survey documenting overdraft fees at the nation's 10 largest banks. The study's overall findings showed that the average highest fee charged by these banks increased by 15 percent in nearly five years. In the graph below, we've pulled out three of the Cincinnati region's largest banks and updated the data to reflect these banks' overdraft charges as they existed at the time this magazine went to press in early June. Unless you opt in to your bank's overdraft service, by the time you read this, these charges will no longer exist for routine ATM and debit card transactions.

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locals only

The city's deep creative roots shine through in these handmade pieces by hometown artists.

Nicolette McFaddin floral felt necklace, $135 (Sassy Boutique, Hyde Park, 513- 871-2500)

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN KURTZ

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NECESSITIES

1

2

3

4

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7

8

9

1. Chad Cully hand-blown drinking glasses, $28 each (MiCA 12/v, Over-the-Rhine, 513-421-3500)

2. Seed Bombs, $7 (VisuaLingual, www.etsy.com/shop/visualingual)

3. Azhand Skokohi ribbon necklace, $150 (Nest, Oakley, 513-871-8852)

4. Sock puppets by Martha Rose Toys, $24.50/pair (Choo Choo's Toys, Wyoming, 513-821-3600)

5. Salt cellar by Brenda Tarbell, $36 (MiCA 12/v)

6. Daisy Flower screen-printed linen pillow, $85 (Three Sheets to the Wind, www.threesheets2.com)

7. Made in Ohio T-shirt, $20 (Wire & Twine, www.wireandtwine.com)

8. Ceramic cups, $33/set of 4 (Igotumatcha, www.etsy.com/shop/igotumatcha)

9. Wooden plane by The Wooden Lion Toy Co., $46 (Choo Choo's Toys)

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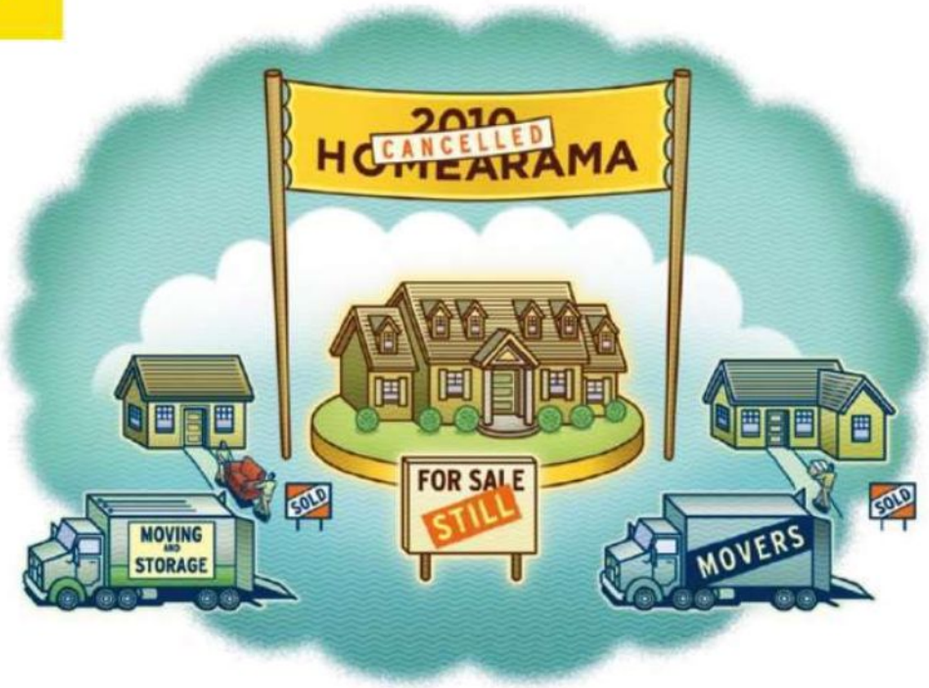

Property Values

show stoppers

Will Homearama be able to bounce back?

» **REAL-ESTATE VOYEURS** will have to get their fix of six-car garages, stone-hewn wine cellars, and home theaters elsewhere this year: For the first time in nearly half a century, Homearama has been cancelled.

The annual orgy of housing excess fell victim to the real-estate bust as cash-strapped builders refused to gamble on speculative construction of luxury housing. Homearama had been showing signs of distress for at least a few years before the Home Builders Association of Greater Cincinnati pulled the plug in March. Houses from the 2007 and 2008 shows lingered on the market, and last year's show moved from the pricier Long Cove in Deerfield Township to the less-expensive Carmelle in Mason, attracting only five builders instead of the usual dozen or so. Those houses, which ranged from $550,00 to $800,000, sold more quickly, but they revealed the delicate balancing act at the heart of the home show: Few people can afford to buy a $2 million house, but who wants to pay to tour a house they can almost afford to buy?

Other changes to the market have made Homearama houses less fashionable. The shows are usually located in new exurban developments, while worries about gas prices and the economy are prompting buyers to look for more modest houses and central locations.

But some market watchers believe the megahouse is poised to make a comeback. "They've always been a little harder to sell, especially now with people worried all the time," says real estate agent Diane Tafuri, who recently re-sold a 2007 Homearama house. "I think it's probably going to take a couple of years until people feel more comfortable, but there are people out there who have the money, and they want to enjoy themselves. They don't want to leave it all to their grandchildren."

It could even happen sooner than expected: The high end of the local real estate market has been showing signs of life in 2010 after at least two years in the doldrums, and building permits for single-family houses were up during the first quarter of this year compared to last year. And last month the HBA announced Homearama's 2011 return. For those who can't wait, previous Homearama houses are currently on the market (*see right*). On a weekend open house, you won't even need to pay to get in.

—JULIE IRWIN ZIMMERMAN

ON THE MARKET

The Sanctuary
Built for the 2008 show at Long Cove and priced at $1.699 million, this 6,900-square-footer on Winding Cape Way in Deerfield Township has 15 rooms, including four full baths and three half-baths. The single-story house boasts green features such as geothermal HVAC as well as barrel-vaulted ceilings and an outdoor fireplace in the covered rear patio.

The Abruzzo
From the 2007 show at the Vintage Club in Montgomery, this $1.875 million transitional home built by Daniels Homes features Tuscan finishes, a first-floor master suite and two second-floor suites with adjacent sitting rooms and private baths, plus a basement pub room.

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER & MARIA HOEY / PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP COURTESY STEVE SYLVESTER, REMAX UNLIMITED / BOTTOM COURTESY LINK REALTY

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STYLE COUNSEL

Good Advice in 60 Seconds: Anne Wainscott, fashion illustrator

You're 93 and look fabulous. How did you get your start in fashion?
I always loved to draw. My mother was from Paris and my father from Russia. He was a tailor. I grew up playing with trimmings.

Do you still sew?
I just made white cotton slipcovers for my couch. I bought the couch when I got married. It's more than 60 years old. I made a jacket out of upholstery fabric once. I saw the white on white texture and it reminded me of Chanel. I knew it needed to be a jacket.

You've always made your own clothes and had a long career at Shillito's. Are you much of a shopper?
I just got this embroidered white shirt and black skirt from Ottoman Imports on MainStrasse in Covington. I've always loved the Burlington Antique Show. I like HighStreet, Anthropologie, and Ikea.

How have fashion trends changed over the years?
It used to be the length of the hem that changed. Now anything goes. It's gotten more relaxed, which I think is so much easier. In the '50s and '60s you wore white gloves, always a hat, and changed your purse every day. Every day!

What elements have endured for you personally?
I love beige and white clothes, pink geraniums with white petunias, gilded mirrors and painted furniture. When I moved into this apartment 10 years ago, the first thing I did was paint that mural by the front door. I wanted the place to look like me.

—ALYSSA BRANDT

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARMEN NAUSEEF

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Good Taste

a moveable feast

The new food trucks are here! The new food trucks are here! Meet two of them.

Name	Café de Wheels
Location	Court & Walnut Sts., downtown
The Scene	Office workers out for a late lunch. Some scoff ("Girl, they want $5 for a hamburger"); others plunk down the dough.
Backstory	Owner Tom Acito spent 20 years living in Los Angeles and knows the power of street food. "I've eaten out of many [taco trucks]," he says. Café de Wheels hit the streets last December.
"I fought the law..."	Acito formed the Cincinnati Food Truck Alliance earlier this year (it includes himself and the owners of Señor Roy's, Habañero's Burrito Wagon, and Taco Azul) and is talking with city officials about food truck–friendly laws.
Find 'em	Check the Café de Wheels Twitter feed for locations and times. www.twitter.com/burgerBgood

Crispy Chicken
This buttermilk-dipped breast is tossed with seasoned flour and fried

Cincinnati Cuban
Cuban pork and ham, onion, pickles, balsamic marmalade, and Swiss

» THE CONCEPT CAME from the west—where mobile food trucks roam the streets of Los Angeles—but Tom Acito and Dave Neal, the respective owners of Café de Wheels and Señor Roy's Taco Patrol, brought them to the Queen City and have attracted a loyal following. They've also hit a road bump: a 1987 law that bans mobile food vendors on city streets. At press time, city council was considering a pilot project to assign truck locations downtown. "I think food trucks add to the culinary and social scene of the city," Acito says. So do we. — AIESHA D. LITTLE

Name	Señor Roy's Taco Patrol
Location	Main & Central, Over-the-Rhine
The Scene	Señor Roy's attracts office workers during the day, but on the weekends and some weeknights, it services the bar scene.
Backstory	Last August, owner Dave Neal discovered California's food trucks. "Not only was the food fresh and wonderful, it was interesting to see people dining on the sidewalk," he says.
"I fought the law..."	Like Acito, Neal has been meeting with city officials about the food vendor law. He says that he and other owners are simply following the national trend. "We're already part of the Cincinnati dining community," he adds.
Find 'em	For locations and times, check Señor Roy's Twitter feed. www.twitter.com/senorroys

Burrito
Al pastor pork shoulder with a pineapple adobo marinade

Nachos
Corn chips with grilled flank steak, melted Chihuahua sauce and pickled red onion

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN KURTZ

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STOREFRONT

master plan

At D Zin in Mason, they really know how to work a room.

» **DANIEL GRUBB'S GRANDFATHER** is in the furniture business. His father is in the furniture business. And in 1991, at age 25, Daniel Grubb started his own furniture business: Rowe Showplace. But a few years ago, Grubb realized he needed to do more than just sell furniture—his customers wanted design advice. So in 2007, he closed Rowe Showplace and started D Zin. "We started asking ourselves, what more can we do to service the customer?" says Grubb.

So, in addition to offering transitional to contemporary furniture styles for living, family, and bedrooms, as well as the kitchen, this store supplies a vision. "We want to be a resource for whatever our clients need," explains Grubb, who can arrange for custom electrical work, if, say, a home theater is in your plans. D Zin's trained staff help customers develop a game plan so that even if you take a year to create the space of your dreams, the pieces you buy will fit with the room. Grubb calls it the Master Plan Counsel Guide. "The Master Plan allows us to talk about where we want the room to end up so we don't make a mistake getting there," he says.

His wife Carol is the store's visual coordinator and creates most of the displays (just try *not* to be happy in a cozy barrel chair upholstered in a bold contemporary chocolate, white, and celery floral). Grubb and his team strive to help customers identify what's important to them, be it sofa, bed, cocktail table, or TV stand. "It's not my room, it's your room," says Grubb. That's comforting. —ALYSSA BRANDT

D Zin, 9376 Mason Montgomery Rd., Mason, (513) 398-3946

(COVET)

>> Jackson wing back chair in "Sundial" $994

>> Glass ice bucket $109

>> Soho ottoman in Java ($189) and stone ($159) with fitted metal trays ($69.99 each)

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS SMITH

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The Itinerary

collectors' items

These Kentucky museums showcase the state's eclectic heritage.

Movie stars. Athletes. Miniatures. Kentucky museums have it all. Their varying subject matter invites visitors to peer inside the lives of Kentuckians past and present. Head to where the grass is blue and bone up on your local history and culture.

Kentucky Gateway Museum Center, Maysville

On the first floor of the Kentucky Gateway Museum Center, you can view the bling—diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and more—from London's Savage & Sons jewelry store. Too bad all of the pieces are smaller than your thumbnail. The replica of the store and its contents are part of the Kathleen Savage Browning Miniatures Collection. Browning, a Maysville native, began collecting miniatures (all in 1:12 scale, meaning one inch equals one foot) in the mid-1970s and has more than enough pieces to fill the approximately 3,200 square feet the center has allotted for this project. The 150-plus exhibits include replicas of a stateroom on the *Titanic* and local treasures like the Russell Theater and the Cox Building. The Kentucky Gateway Museum Center is also home to a genealogical research library that includes 20,000 photos and other images, 7,000 manuscripts and documents, and 4,000 rolls of microfilm, all available for tracing family histories throughout the state.

Behringer-Crawford Museum, Covington

It's right in our backyard, atop a hill in Devou Park with a sweeping view of Cincinnati, but how many of us have actually gone to the Behringer-Crawford Museum? With transportation as one of its major themes, the museum covers how we get around, exploring everything from rivers and open roads to trains and airplanes throughout the four exhibit galleries. It's home to the last streetcar to run through Northern Kentucky in the 1950s, fully retooled with talking mannequins that tell the tales of traveling by trolley from the perspectives of the conductor, a housewife shopping downtown, and a boy riding the rails to meet friends. Yeah, it's a little weird, but weird is part of the museum's DNA. It still displays some of the wild and wacky findings of its namesake William Behringer, including the body of a two-headed calf from Georgetown, Ohio.

Muhammad Ali Center, Louisville

"I shook up the world!" Cassius Clay, a.k.a. Muhammad Ali, shouts after winning the heavyweight championship title fight against Sonny Liston in 1964. This emotional outburst appears in the short film that acts as your introduction to the Muhammad Ali Center in downtown Louisville. The $82 million showplace opened to much fanfare in fall 2005 and now draws more than 100,000 people a year, a testament to Ali's continued popularity, long after his 1981 retirement from boxing. You'll get the scoop on all of Ali's battles in and outside of the ring, including his status as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War and his bout against Joe Frazier, known as "The Thrilla in Manila." You can get into the ring with the interactive exhibition, *Train with Ali,* where visitors practice on a speed bag and shadow box with the champ. And don't forget to head to the video-on-demand area where you can watch recordings of 15 of Ali's more memorable fights.

The Rosemary Clooney House, Augusta

A tiny house along the waterfront in Au-

PHOTOGRAPHS: RIGHT COURTESY KENTUCKY GATEWAY MUSEUM CENTER / LEFT COURTESY MUHAMMAD ALI CENTER

Kentucky Gateway Museum Center
215 Sutton St., Maysville, (606) 564-5865, www.kentuckygatewaymuseumcenter.org

Behringer-Crawford Museum
1600 Montague Rd., Covington, (859) 491-4003, www.bcmuseum.org

Muhammad Ali Center
144 N. Sixth St., Louisville, (502) 584-9254, www.alicenter.org

The Rosemary Clooney House
106 E. Riverside Dr., Augusta, (866) 898-8091, www.rosemaryclooneyhouse.com

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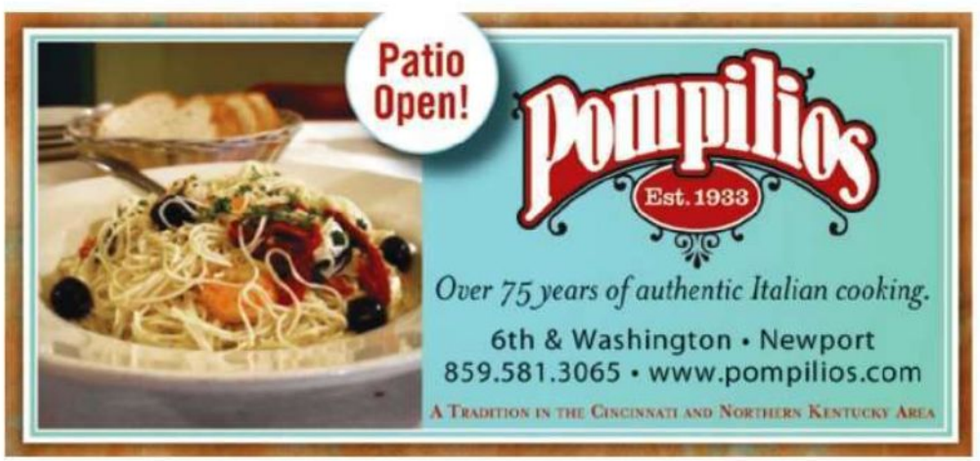
gusta serves as a memorial of sorts to one of Kentucky's grande dames—Rosemary Clooney. The actress/singer died in 2002, but here, her memory lives on. Folks around these parts know the Clooney name well, but it was former Miss America and Augusta native Heather French Henry and her husband, former Lt. Governor Dr. Steve Henry, who led the effort to build a storehouse for Clooney artifacts in her hometown. Visitors can browse two floors of memorabilia, including the *White Christmas* room, dedicated to the 1954 movie of the same name. In it, you'll find replicas of the red robe and blue dress Clooney wore in the film as well as the military jacket worn by Bing Crosby. There are also candid family photos (George's prom picture, Nina and Nick's wedding picture) and a family tree in the gallery on the first floor.

Kentucky's Historic House Museums

If you're a history buff, odds are you've come across some of the grand old homes that dot Kentucky's landscape. From the Dinsmore Homestead in Burlington all the way down to Riverview at Hobson Grove in Bowling Green, the museums are the former estates of the state's 18th and 19th century bigwigs in agriculture, military, and business. Tools used to produce hemp in the 1800s are on display at Louisville's Farmington Historic Home, and the Pope Villa in Lexington is one of the best surviving domestic designs of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who was known as the country's first professional architect. You'll get a peek back in time that just may help you appreciate the comforts to be found in your own home.

—AIESHA D. LITTLE

Kentucky's Historic House Museums
www.vpa.org/museumsky.html



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PAULA NORTON**

07.2010

15 minutes

Cincinnati Magazine and Christian Moerlein celebrated May's beer-themed issue with a sold-out launch party at The Rookwood Pottery Company.

FEATURED SPONSOR: Eckerlin Meats

Erin Knodel, Sean Rhiney, Jessica Nielsen and John Knodel

Christian Moerlein's Greg Hardman welcomed the crowd

Sean Kelley with State Representative Denise Driehaus

Ed McMasters & Eva Schott McMasters

The Rookwood Pottery Company's Chris Rose unveiled the Moerlein Northern Liberties stein

Ann Kean, Ginger Vanderlinde, Claire Vanderlinde and Elizabeth North

Cincinnati Magazine and the Madeira Chamber of Commerce welcomed more than 300 shoppers to a Girls Night Out shopping event in downtown Madeira.

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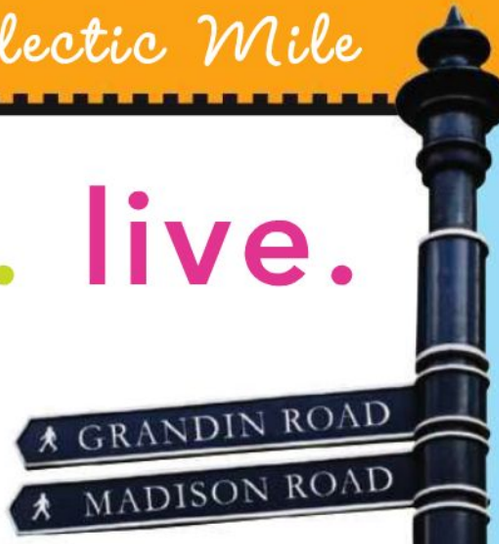

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Soap Floats

Can the Gamble House be saved? The good people of Westwood are willing to try.

Despite the dreary weather, when I heard last winter that a rally would be held to save the embattled Gamble House on Werk Road in Westwood, I decided to check it out. The 13-room house, built in the 1830s, had been in the news as concerned west side citizens struggled to shield it from its owners, the Indian Hill–based Greenacres Foundation, which had announced its intention to tear the place down. No doubt I would see a handful of shivering, well-intentioned do-gooders pacing with signs in front of the haggard mansion. But to update my membership in the Well-Intentioned Do-Gooders Club, I thought I'd swell the ranks.

What I saw as I drove along Werk Road bordered on the surreal. Easily more than a hundred people lined the sidewalks on both sides of the road in front of the Gamble House, shaking their signs at the passing drivers, many of whom honked in loud support. Vans from two local TV stations were knifed into spots a couple of blocks away. Unable to find an open space, I turned around and drove back through the cheering gauntlet of protestors. With the streets just as jammed on the other side of the house, I turned around again and drove through one more time, staggered by the enthusiasm—and sheer size—of the crowd exhorting each other with steamy breaths of defiance.

This couldn't be real. But it *was* happening. The question then became—why? West-siders care about their community as much as anyone, but historic preservation isn't exactly the type of lightning rod that gooses average joes and janes from their couches and shoves them out the door into a freezing afternoon to stand by a road lugging signs in support of a house that, until recently, many didn't know existed. Something else must be going on.

The Internet forums hadn't provided a clue that a groundswell was burbling. I had heard no impassioned talk among neighbors or at the grocery store or coffee houses or restaurants. Out of the blue, it seemed that west-siders were mad as hell and weren't going to take it anymore. But mad about what? Was an old house that no one had lived in for years really igniting such a spirited call to arms?

The Gamble House is a beautiful place, no question. A clapboard Victorian with Italianate features, it sits on 21 rolling acres on Werk Road, a couple of blocks from Mother of Mercy High School in the heart of Westwood. Though it has remained unoccupied since 1961, when Olivia Gamble died, for many years it was

ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN SNOOK

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zealously preserved under the eye of James N. Gamble's grandson, Louis Nippert, a wealthy and well-known local tycoon who, perhaps most famously, was a part-owner of the Reds during the days of the Big Red Machine. After significant restoration in 1991, the house was given a preservation award by the Miami Purchase Association (now the Cincinnati Preservation Association) but since then—or rather, since Nippert's death in late 1992—the house has been sliding slowly downhill, figuratively speaking. In truth, it needs a lot of work, but according to an inspection report, it is structurally sound. The report estimates repair costs between $300,000 and $400,000. (C. Francis Barrett, the attorney for Greenacres, contends that the cost to *restore* the home would be much higher, in the $2 million range.) Though the windows are now boarded up, it retains a certain magisterial grace.

Given the house's location, the typical west-sider has driven past it hundreds, even thousands, of times. But I'll wager that until a few months ago none of them had any idea it was called The Gamble House or that it had been the home (from 1875 to 1932) of James N. Gamble, philanthropist, inventor of Ivory Soap and creator of Ivorydale, benefactor of such local landmarks as the University of Cincinnati's Nippert Stadium and Christ Hospital's research center, scion of the famous Gamble family—as in Procter &—that played a pretty big role in building Cincinnati.

For years I drove or jogged past and admired the place, but I didn't know it had a name or even that it was vacant. I assumed that members of the local gentry lived there, cozy in their retreat from the surrounding neighborhood that was, well, in transition. What, then, had turned this impressive yet largely anonymous home into a *cause célèbre*? To find out, I contacted the group fueling the fight.

GREG AND LIZ Kissel of the Westwood Historical Society have spearheaded what quickly has become an uproar. We met at the Henke Winery in Westwood, where the broad bay windows next to our table look out on the stately Westwood Town Hall, opened in 1889, thanks in part to the civic leadership of James N. Gamble. The hall is located on Harrison Avenue, which had been the main artery connecting Westwood to downtown Cincinnati during Gamble's day, and through his efforts in support of a rail system that had been located nearby, the area grew into what is now the city's largest community.

Across the street stands the gorgeous stone facade of the Westwood United Methodist Church, another gift from Mr. Gamble, who, according to the church's website, matched the contributions of the 150 other members of the congregation five to one to pay for the church, which opened in 1897. Around the corner and a few blocks down Montana Avenue sprawls the Gamble-Nippert YMCA. Residential streets in the neighborhood include Gamble Avenue; Penrose Place (named for Gamble's wife, the former Margaret Penrose); and Daytona Avenue, named for Gamble's vacation home in Daytona, Florida.

OK, I was starting to understand the passion behind the battle to save the home. Mr. James Norris Gamble had touched a lot of lives, and his influence and generosity continues to pervade Westwood. The research I'd done about him since that first rally revealed a staggering list of accomplishments. He was, by all accounts, not only fabulously successful in business and a forward-thinking visionary but a community-minded citizen and a helluva nice guy. Maybe the fight was less about the house than about preserving the memory of a man who was, without question, Westwood's all-time leading resident.

That theory was pretty much confirmed by the Kissels. They looked nothing like the rabble-rousing firebrands I expected. In their middle years, they immediately strike you as reserved and refined. With his lush white hair and white goatee, Greg, an architect, would look at home mounted on a snorting steed in paintings of the Battle of Gettsyburg. Liz, a registered dietician, is petite and exudes a quiet sophistication. They're life-long west-siders—she from Cheviot, he from Bridgetown. For the next two hours they outlined the history of the house and the fight to save it.

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Concern about the fate of the Gamble House is not new for them. Though most of us began hearing about it in February, the house has been a steady blip on their radar since they helped form the Westwood Historical Society in 2002.

"From the very beginning that was one of the first questions everybody would ask," Liz says. "What's going to happen to the Gamble House? It's been there forever, but nobody really knows what goes on. You don't see a lot of activity except for people cutting the grass periodically." To find an answer, she contacted Carter Randolph, executive vice president of the Greenacres Foundation, who represents Louise Nippert, Louis's widow. (Randolph also oversees the Louise Dieterle Nippert Trust.) Though Liz says Randolph was vague in his responses to her initial inquiries about the house, she felt that no plans were being made to change the home in any way, and the society's concern was unwarranted. "There didn't seem to be an urgency," Greg adds. "There didn't seem to be much for us to follow up on."

And so they didn't. Years passed. They met with Randolph a few times, even toured the place in 2007 and 2008, and although they remained wary, they believed that Greenacres held the house's best interest at heart. Then in March 2009, in response to a neighbor's complaint, the house was cited by the city for its peeling paint and broken sidewalk. The city contacted Randolph requesting repairs. In August 2009, the house was officially transferred from the trust to the foundation, in what amounted to little more than some paperwork. The city sent more requests for repairs to Randolph, now representing Greenacres as the owner. While some repairs were made, according to the city's records, that file also indicated that the foundation planned to demolish the house.

Historical society member Bob Prokop saw the declaration of intent on the city's Community Problem Oriented Policing (CPOP) website, an online version of building and code violations records. Prokop and his fiancée, Laura Twichell, have been in Westwood all of three years. They moved from New Jersey—not for jobs, but to take advantage of Cincinnati's housing market. "You can't find an affordable house with character there," Prokop said. His love for classic homes has led to his interest in fighting for the Gamble House. Members of the society and Westwood Concern, a group of private citizens dedicated to civic causes in the community, gathered on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend to plot strategy. They needed to find a way to convince the city—and the owners—of the house's historic importance and its cherished place in the hearts of west-siders. A pretty tall order for a house that a lot of people didn't know about.

"They just know it as the big yellow house," Liz says. "And because it sits back so far, people drive by it and can't see it."

The committee leading the charge to save the house, therefore, had to broadcast that story as quickly as possible and hope the local citizenry would follow the call to action. The Kissels agree that when people hear the story of James N. Gamble and the fight to save the house, they climb aboard the bandwagon.

Of course, being on the bandwagon and helping to push it down the road are altogether different. Sure, the average resident would prefer that such a unique place be preserved, but is that resident really going to do anything about it? Perhaps the folks at Greenacres had the same thought. And just in case, they moved fast in pushing the city for a permit to demolish.

Big mistake.

THE PEOPLE LEADING the charge are a savvy bunch. They wrote letters to the city, sent fliers to local residents, appeared on local radio shows. They launched a social-media campaign that spread the word in ways never possible before. Society member Mary Kuhl set up a Facebook page that in just a few months drew nearly 3,000 members. Prokop, a web designer, fed the page with regular updates and created savethegamblehouse.org, which defaults to the Facebook page "Save the Historic Gamble Estate NOW!" He also sent out more tweets than a flock of starving egrets. An online petition to save the house gathered 1,500 signatures in a matter of weeks.

The sweep of interest rolled way beyond the boundaries of Westwood—to every community in the city, to transplants in Texas, Arizona, and California, even as far away as Northern Ireland, from which the Gamble family had emigrated almost 200 years ago. Prokop came upon the blog of Nelson McCausland, Northern Ireland's Minister of Culture, Arts, and Leisure, who, purely by chance, posted an entry in February about James Gamble Sr., putting him in the "Scotch-Irish Hall of Fame." Prokop commented on the entry, explaining the fight to save James N. Gamble's house. McCausland was so moved by the story that he sent a letter of support that was presented to city council in May before the unanimous vote to designate the home as an "historic district overlay" and put it on the Cincinnati Historic Landmark list.

The designation offers some protection, a few hoops that Greenacres would have to jump through before bringing in the wrecking ball, but there are limits. Despite the designation, the house could still be demolished. And Greenacres contends that the request for the demolition permit predates the designation anyway so they're free to do what they want. Judge Norbert Nadel was scheduled to make a decision on that question, but in late May the case was referred to the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Ohio after the attorney for Greenacres filed more claims challenging the constitutionality of council's decision. That delays the final decision, which will likely be appealed no matter what it is. Translation: This fight could drag on for some time.

The broad support suggests that the movement has spread beyond a classic west side—east side battle, and the Kissels agree that this is much more than Cincinnati's typical trench warfare. "Maybe that had something to do with it at first, but it's grown much larger than a west side thing," Greg says. Liz concurs, noting that they hear frequently from east-siders who support the cause.

And it's not as if Greenacres is some rapacious corporation gleefully eager to flatten our history to build condos. Greenacres puts much of its time and resources

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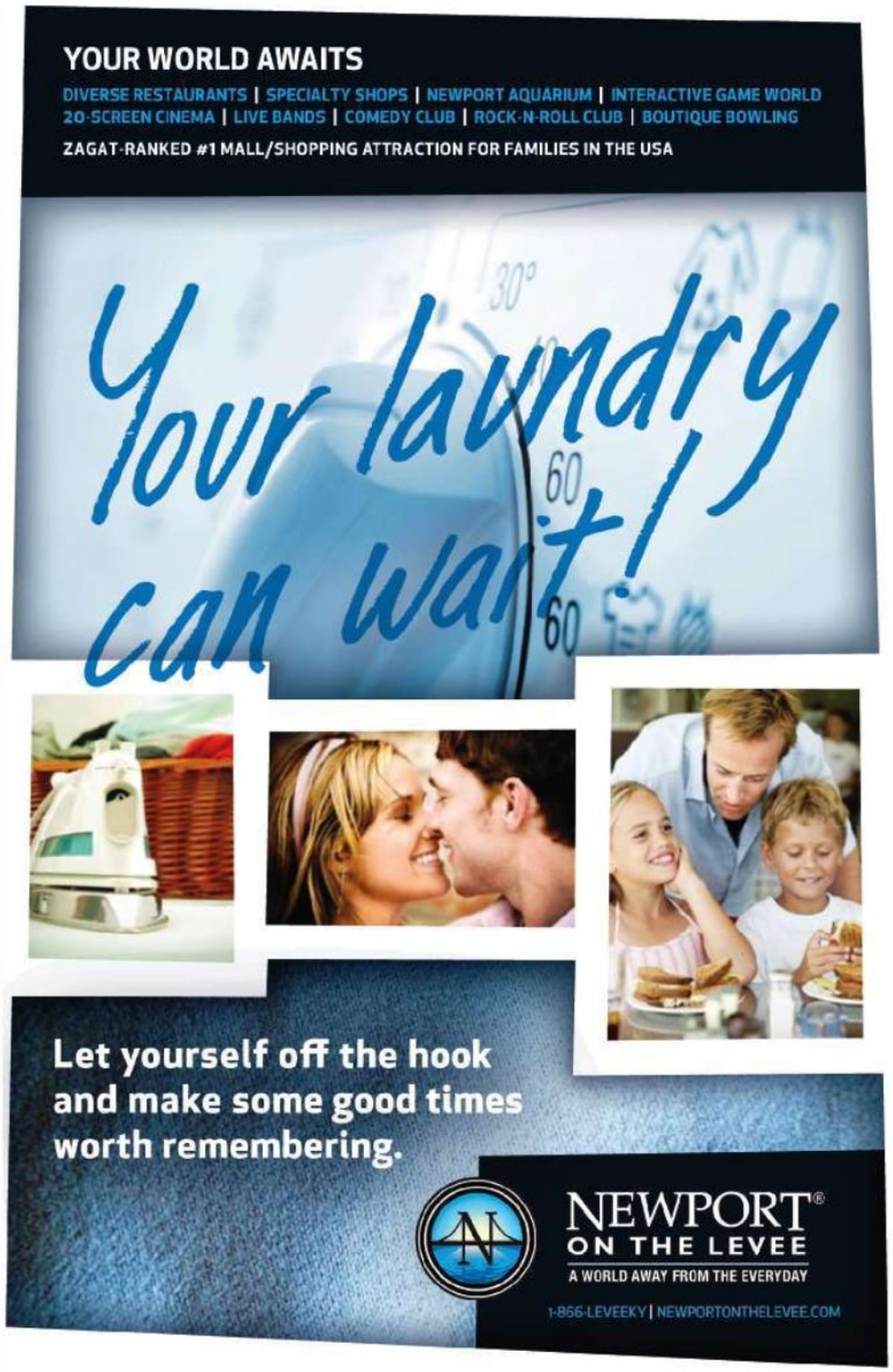
into programs designed, as they state on their website, "To encourage conservation and appreciation of nature by providing the public, particularly children, opportunities to study plant and animal life in their natural settings." The foundation wants to extend the programs already in place in Indian Hill to the Gamble property. Tough to argue with such a noble undertaking. Westwoodians wonder, however, why the house can't be part of the plan. The historical society, according to Liz Kissel, has offered a number of suggestions for ways the house could be used. "We researched other historic houses and how they were repurposed," she says. "We came up with a bunch of different suggestions. [Carter Randolph] said none of them are viable." (Randolph contends that he's never received a written proposal from the historical society and that "any uses of the property would have to be very respectful of the Gambles and the Nipperts.")

Still, Prokop says that everyone in the group has worked long hours in the past few months, noting that when he would e-mail the Kissels at one in the morning, he'd usually receive an immediate reply. He has thrown himself completely into the cause, believing that the house, and the man it honors, are worth what he calls his "second full-time job."

And as the story of James N. Gamble spreads, it's likely that more and more folks will pick up protest signs and march—if only symbolically. That may still be necessary. In late April, the Cincinnati Preservation Association offered to buy the house, including a small piece of land for access. Attorney Barrett says CPA's bid was not a formal offer, and that the foundation has concerns about the intended use of the property, which have been expressed to CPA's interim director Paul Muller. The Kissels believe the CPA could work well in partnership with the Greenacres educational programs. But would such an uneasy alliance actually work? Maybe, in a way, we owe it to the guy. The Kissels certainly feel that way.

"We just want them to give us a chance to be stewards," Greg says, "for someone who, frankly, was a steward for us."



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Soldier of Misfortune

Like a Marine on patrol, Myron Reynolds scouts the city for homeless veterans.

Lying on a urine-stained mattress inside the ticket booth of an abandoned parking lot near the Ohio River, Doug could be the sole survivor of some urban catastrophe. His mattress barely fits inside the booth, and the drafty Plexiglas windows are scrawled with graffiti, but the thrumming I-75 overpass above him keeps him dry, and that is a blessing.

Doug's living situation seems post-apocalyptic because, in a way, it is. Over the last three years, the world as he's known it has collapsed. First his wife died, then he took up drinking to cope. He lost his house in the process, and started sleeping on the streets. Now he panhandles behind Macy's during the day. At night he returns to his ticket-booth home, pulls a Captain Morgan baseball cap low over his bearded face, and sleeps. "We all have our own circumstances," he says. "I ain't blaming the system, I ain't blaming nothing. I made myself."

Over the noise of the rain one soggy spring morning, Doug hears car doors slam and four men approach, calling out his name. He rises slowly in the booth, feeling for his knife. Just the other day, four skinheads wandered into a nearby camp and beat a homeless man. News like that spreads fast on the streets, and Doug isn't taking chances.

But the men calling his name aren't a threat; they're from the Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCBHS) homeless outreach program. Among them is Myron Reynolds, a 40-year-old former Marine and cop turned caseworker who is part of a new effort to locate Cincinnati's mentally ill homeless veterans and put them in touch with services that can help.

Reynolds greets Doug and strikes up a conversation, even as a freight train passes overhead and threatens to swallow his words. They are an incongruous pair. Reynolds, broad-shouldered in a black North Face jacket, is fresh-faced and confident. Slouched in his ticket booth, Doug is disheveled, wary, and defensive. With a white beard and misty eyes, Doug looks 65, but could be much younger. A life like Doug's can carve years into a man's face.

Reynolds asks Doug how long he's been living like this, and if he needs anything. He has been told that Doug was in the military, and Doug confirms the rumor: he served in the Air Force from 1982 to 1987, when he was honorably discharged. Reynolds asks Doug what medications he's been prescribed—a polite way to find out if Doug has a diagnosed mental health condition. Doug admits he has a drinking problem, but says he doesn't take any medications.

Reynolds explains that there's help if Doug wants it. There's the Mt. Airy Shelter, for example, which reserves 26 of its beds for veterans. There's the Joseph House on

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WILLIS

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Republic Street in Over-the-Rhine, which offers substance abuse programs and halfway housing for veterans. And there's the Veteran's Administration, of course, which also offers substance abuse treatment, rehabilitation, and transitional housing. By the end of the conversation, it's clear that Doug recognizes Reynolds and his colleagues as allies. Still, he's noncommittal. So Reynolds slips Doug his card. "Stop by and see me," he says, and walks away.

Back in the car, Reynolds isn't fazed by Doug's ambivalence. "You can't make anybody do anything they don't want to do," he says. "It's not gonna happen." He's been at this since last September, when GCBHS hired him to join the Projects for Assistance in Transitions from Homelessness (PATH) team as a special liaison for veterans. It takes a veteran to find a veteran, the theory went, and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration granted the Ohio Department of Mental Health the seed money to fund this pilot program.

Since then he has helped dozens of vets access everything from hot meals and health care to rehab and psychiatric treatment. But the first challenge with each of them is the one he faces today with Doug, huddled in the dilapidated ticket booth in the rain. "The main thing," says Reynolds, "is to get him off the streets."

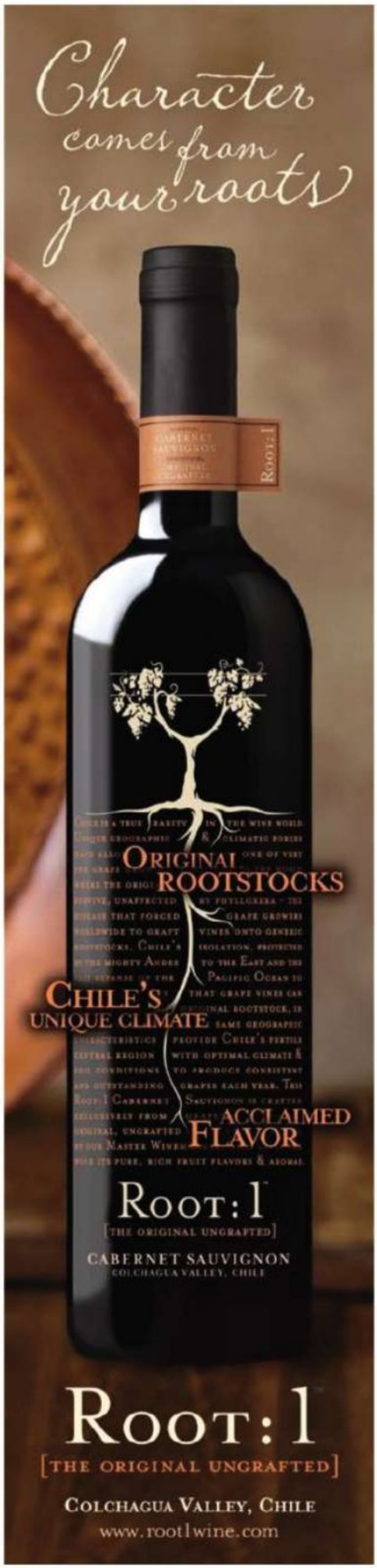
"IT'S HARD FOR us as non-veterans to match veterans with resources," says Debbie DeMarcus, who supervises the PATH program. That's where Reynolds comes in. He understands the complex safety net of agencies established to help America's former soldiers. He also understands the difficulties of connecting with those men and women once they've dropped out of conventional society. "We've always seen homeless veterans, especially the older Vietnam veterans," DeMarcus says. But last year, PATH's outreach workers only identified 17 veterans. In his first seven months on the job, Reynolds found 61. It's a mission that he's embraced with the vigor, tenacity, and the Semper Fi persistence of, well, a Marine. It's in his blood.

Reynolds was 17 years old when he enlisted—so young that his mother had to sign the paperwork. A week after his graduation from Woodward High School, he shipped out to boot camp. He served with the Marines from 1988 to 1992; in 1990, his service included driving an amphibious assault vehicle called an AmTrac in the deserts of the Middle East during the first Gulf War. Back home in Cincinnati, Reynolds became a police officer, patrolling Districts 2 and 5. But for a man who likes helping people, police work soon wore on Reynolds.

"I could put someone in jail on Friday, on Monday they'd be out, and on Tuesday I'd get a call for the same problem as on Friday," Reynolds recalls. He wanted to play a role in changing people's lives, but that wasn't happening the way he'd hoped. Then, in 1997, his friend and fellow cop Daniel Pope was killed while serving a warrant in Clifton Heights. Reynolds questioned his own passion for police work. "A lot of police officers have always wanted to be police officers," he says. "For me that was never a goal."

Reynolds finally quit the force in 2000, enrolling in criminal justice and human services classes at the University of Cincinnati. Working at the Talbert House as a mentor for young men with substance abuse problems and mental health issues, he found his calling in social work. He still drives through the city with the street-scanning eyes of a cop looking for trouble. But the kind of trouble he's looking for is different these days.

Veterans are a unique subset among Cincinnati's mentally ill homeless. They're more likely to have symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, for example, which can lead to substance abuse and a host of other psychological problems. And then there's the military training itself, which emphasizes pride, self-reliance, and a put-up-and-shut-up attitude. The old "Army of One" mantra can be hard to shed. Reynolds says many mentally ill homeless veterans have difficulty admitting they need help. Fewer still have the wherewithal to find it and the humility to accept it.



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Talking to a fellow veteran helps, but it doesn't seal the deal. "Just because I walk into a camp and say 'Hey, I'm a veteran,' they don't just start telling me everything," Reynolds says. "It takes a period of adjustment, of them actually knowing me." To cut through the initial distrust, Reynolds tells stories about his own time as a Marine. "That may have nothing to do with them getting off the street," he says, "but that's a little hole that I just opened for them." It may be months before they're ready to make a change. But when the time is right, they know who to call.

The design of the project also helps Reynolds make inroads. Every time he hits the streets to visit old clients or goes out on a reconnaissance mission looking for new ones, he's accompanied by one of the peer workers from the Joseph House—veterans themselves who were once homeless and substance abusers. Now they get paid to visit camps with Reynolds, and they often run into people they know. Standing at Reynolds's side, their presence alone is proof that starting a new life is possible.

TO IDENTIFY CLIENTS, Reynolds often relies on the fact that the homeless veteran community in Cincinnati is surprisingly well-connected. At soup kitchens, in camps, or wandering the streets, they seem to find each other. "It's just like magnets," says Ray Holley, one of the Joseph House peer support workers. "Veterans have a certain bearing, a body language. It's how they present themselves."

There's even a homeless encampment in Queensgate that everyone calls "the Veterans' Camp." Tucked into a leafy scrap of land between two busy roads, the camp is invisible from the street. But Reynolds and Holley know which bush to push out of the way to find the entrance. And when they walk in, Tom is there to greet them.

An army reserve veteran, Tom is gaunt, with thick, smoky glasses and a rattling cough. He wears a grubby polo shirt tucked smartly into high-hitched trousers. He's a man of few words and moves like a whisper. About five years ago, Tom established this camp with military efficiency and maximum functionality. The boozy havoc of some other homeless enclaves is nowhere in sight. Strips of carpet on the ground help with the mud. A tarp tied to four trees and propped with a length of PVC pipe keeps dry a box of kindling for a wood-burning stove. Gallon jugs of drinking water are stacked in one corner. In another is a table of pots and pans—all clean. At the far end of the camp there's even an outhouse. And tied to the central beam of Tom's sleeping quarters, an American flag flutters above a grocery cart full of odds and ends.

Tom sleeps on a bedroll on the ground in an enclosure of wood and plastic the size of a hospital elevator. It's bone-dry inside, even on a rainy morning, and the plastic walls and ceiling are black with soot. A candle burns in the corner, giving off just enough light to make out the room's con-

WHERE'S THE BEEF? OH....FOUND IT!

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Then we can help you take off a quarter pound or two.

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tents. At one end sits the stove, which keeps the camp's inhabitants warm through the winter. Next to the stove is a Thermos that Tom usually keeps filled with camp coffee, and a Coleman propane burner for cooking. A baseball bat sits near the entryway; Tom has heard about the skinheads too, and he isn't taking any chances. The camp sleeps three to four people comfortably. Anyone is welcome, so long as they're willing to take on their share of chores. "Anybody that needs help, I try to help," he says.

Four days a week, Tom picks up litter and takes out the garbage for a Sunoco station. They pay him $10, which he uses to buy food and supplies. Church groups stop by with gifts sometimes. Tom goes to the FreeStore once a month. And the holidays are always good for canned goods. "We survive," he says. "We work together. Nobody charges nobody nothing. Everybody pitches in."

All the same, Tom has lived outside for years now, and he's getting tired of scraping by. "I don't want to plan to be out here next winter," he says. Reynolds helped enroll Tom in GCBHS's Path to Recovery program, a new effort to help homeless alcoholics get housing. When housing becomes available, Tom will be assigned a caseworker and will move into a place of his own. When Reynolds and Holley leave, Ron, another veteran living in the camp, calls out, "If we'd known you was coming, we'd have had the cake and coffee ready!"

WALKING BACK TO his car, Reynolds recalls a lesson he learned as a cop. "I used to tell rookies that you can't walk into a house thinking 'I'm the big bad cop and you're going to do what I tell you to do,' because it doesn't work that way," he says. "That's how I feel about this job. I'm actually going into their homes, even though it is a homeless camp. If I go in there and tell them to do this and that, they'll tell me 'What are you talking about? Get lost!' "

Independent of PATH's new program, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced a five-year plan to end homelessness among veterans. Reynolds appreciates the commitment, but he expects there will still be homeless veterans for many years to come. Most of the clients he works with are from the Vietnam era, he explains. They didn't become homeless directly upon their return from Vietnam. Many ended up on the streets years later as a result of accumulated problems—failed marriages, lost jobs, substance abuse, untreated mental illness, and the pernicious legacy of PTSD. Reynolds anticipates a new wave of PTSD-afflicted veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan will hit the streets over the course of the next 20 years. "I think it's going to be another cycle," he predicts.

For now, Reynolds is taking his job day by day, one individual at a time. "Being a cop, I started off thinking that I could change the world," he says. "You can't change the world. But with this job, I can at least see one person change."

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BURGER HEAVEN

Illustrations by HAWK KRALL

Photographs by RYAN KURTZ

By DONNA COVRETT/BRENT DONALDSON/AIESHA D. LITTLE/GRACE E. SAUNDERS/MEGAN SCHERER/KATHERINE L. SONTAG/JAY STOWE/LINDA VACCARIELLO/AMANDA BOYD WALTERS

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The 40 Tastiest, Gooiest, Juiciest, Lip-Smackingly Meatiest, Mouth-Wateringly Satisfying Hamburgers in Cincinnati.

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WHO MAKES THE BEST BURGER IN THE CITY?

It's a perennial question, sometimes a contentious one; a question we're frequently asked, and one we were willing to research. Naturally, when you're debating great burgers, a lot must go into consideration—quality of meat, seasoning, cooking methods, buns, toppings, ambiance, value—to determine that answer. So we devised a rating system, created a master list of burger joints, and doing our two-fisted duty, hit the road. We pulled up stools at diner counters, slid into upholstered chairs in luxurious dining rooms, put our elbows on the bar at several taverns, used good silver and linen, ate from paper plates, and on several occasions, stood in marvelous, beefy ecstasy while burger juice dripped onto our shoes. We ate them plain, we ate them posh, and sometimes we ate more than we should. In the end, we found 40 burgers to assign to our hamburger heaven, several hellishly good sides, and a half-dozen veggie burgers we'd be willing to get carnal over. But before you read on, prepare to be as surprised as we were at how the results stacked up. The number one burger? It's probably not who you think. —*DONNA COVRETT*

1

The World's Best Burger
WILDFLOWER CAFÉ
$10

This perfect architectural specimen of exceptionally thick and juicy grass-fed beef (from 100-percent pasture-raised cows) is seasoned and cooked with steakhouse skill and tucked into a glossy toasted pretzel bun that's neither too dense nor too soft and handles the meat juices without disintegrating. No tomatoes were harmed before their time—the cozy café follows the seasonal intentions of chef/owner Todd Hudson. It came with oily sun dried tomatoes, crackling strips of double smoked bacon, perfectly melted provolone, and a smear of mayonnaise spiked with herbs from Wildflower's garden. Holy cow! */ 207 E. Main St., Mason, (513) 492-7514*

2

Big Ted Deluxe
CITY VIEW TAVERN
$6.75

The Big Ted Deluxe takes about 20 minutes from flattop to table, so just kick back and wait. We promise it's worth it. Because inside that plastic basket, next to a bag of chips (Grippo's BBQ, please), sits a most worthy treat: a hand-formed six-ounce patty, direct from Ebert's Meat Market, so pleasantly seasoned that a peppery sensation lingers on your tongue. Paired with spicy brown mustard, mayo, ketchup, American cheese, onion, chopped iceberg, and tart pickles, it's a drippy, smooth, tangy, savory masterpiece served on a light and fluffy Giminetti bun. */ 403 Oregon St., Mt. Adams, (513) 241-8439*

3

Burger with Burgundy Wine, Wild Mushroom & Truffle Sauce
TERRY'S TURF CLUB
$10

Think of Terry's as a "high dive"—neon kitsch on the walls, peanuts on the floor, grease from the griddle in the air, and a bow-tied maître d' to seat the madding crowd. Here the thick, free-form patty on its toasted bun (so unwieldy they bring a knife to the table so you can cut it) starts at $7.50 and comes with a choice of lettuce, tomato, pickle, onion, banana peppers, and American or Swiss. Beyond that, swanky accoutrements (foie gras, even) bump up the tab. The burgundy wine reduction with mushrooms and truffles soaks into the meat in a way that's truly edifying. It almost makes you forget the long, *long* wait. A bottle from their well-stocked Bevadors helps that, too. */ 4618 Eastern Ave., Linwood, (513) 533-4222*

The Secret Recipe

It's been no less than burger bedlam since Terry's Turf Club opened its neon-lit doors in 2007. Owner Terry Carter—expert fly fisherman, blowgun craftsman, and burger king—shares his secret.

TERRY'S TURF CLUB BURGER

YIELD: eight half-pound burgers

INGREDIENTS:

4 POUNDS ground Angus chuck (a mixture of 81 percent beef to 19 percent fat)
½ TEASPOON OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: smoked paprika; cayenne pepper; ground cumin; ground anise seed; turmeric; onion powder; garlic powder; ground dark chocolate
Sea salt and pepper
8 kaiser buns from Shadeau Bakery
3 TABLESPOONS each olive oil and melted unsalted butter

Heat gas grill to 400–425 degrees. Hand form eight patties, ½ pound each. Mix spices and ground dark chocolate together. Salt and pepper both sides of burgers. Sprinkle a pinch of seasoning mixture over each side of patty, then grill to preferred temperature. Blend olive oil and melted butter together. Lightly brush the underside of each bun with mixture and grill until toasted.

TERRY'S TIPS:

1. Carter prefers Himalayan or Hawaiian salt. "Never use regular table salt. The iodine imparts a bitter flavor."

2. For the ground chocolate, use a good dark Belgian with at least 60 percent cacao.

3. "Be an adventurer" and experiment with the seasoning mix.

4. He prefers a gas grill because "it cooks hotter and more evenly."

5. Never poke the burger with a fork, or the meat juices will end up in the grill or on your plate instead of in the burger.

6. Flip only once. Flipping back and forth dries it out.

7. Carter's favorite toppings: grilled onions and Jarlsberg Swiss.

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Clockwise from top left: Neon lights up Terry's Turf Club; where the magic happens; Terry's piece de resistance; *manning the grill.*

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Keystone Bar & Grill's Gonzo Burger, topped with artichokes, sun dried tomatoes, and Gorgonzola cheese.

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4

The Gas Light Burger
GAS LIGHT CAFÉ
$5.75

➡ The half-pound Gas Light Burger has a hand-shaped, drip-down-your-chin, char-grilled patty that's tucked in a cornmeal-dusted bun and delivered Happy Days–style in a red plastic basket, tasting for all the world like Dad's best backyard patio handiwork on a summer afternoon. You won't find fancy-schmancy toppings here, but this is a good, good, *good* burger. */ 6104 Montgomery Rd., Pleasant Ridge, (513) 631-6977*

5

VZ Classic
VANZANDT RESTAURANT AND TAVERN
$10

➡ Once known as Budna Grill, VanZandt has quickly garnered a reputation for some solid pub grub and familiar comforts. Chef/owner Chris Hoeweler—a former chef at Trio and a College Hill native—builds burgers with well-seasoned beef procured from neighboring Humbert's Meats, imparts a good char-broiled flavor, and serves them on a sturdy herbed bun or onion-flecked foccacia. One of four designer options, the VZ Classic comes draped in American cheese and grilled onions with bacon, lettuce, and tomato. */ 1810 W. Galbraith Rd., College Hill, (513) 407-6418*

6

Beef Hamburger
VIRGILS CAFÉ
$10

➡ Virgils feels too fancy to qualify as a burger joint. Clean and crisp black linen tablecloths covered with butcher paper and overly polite waiters just don't scream out "Burger time!" But don't let that fool you: the modestly named "beef hamburger"—grilled, succulent beef topped with sautéed mushrooms and caramelized onions on a multigrain kaiser roll—equals hamburger heaven. And *do not* miss out on their sweet potato fries with a side of ancho-mayo. */ 710 Fairfield Ave., Bellevue, (859) 491-3287*

7

The Soul Burger
OAKLEY PUB & GRILL
$6.95

➡ Trying to tease out the secrets of the Soul Burger is not easy; they hold their cards pretty close to the chest at Oakley Pub & Grill. But this much is certain: As burgers go, it's a soul-stirrer, starting with the arcane mixture of jerk spices (cinnamon, cumin, maybe even some allspice) sprinkled on the meat while it's cooking, which gives the patty a sweet-spicy kick. That's the foundation, on top of which they pile bacon (baked in the oven for crispness), a luscious heap of onions (grilled fresh each morning on the flat-top), melted American cheese, and super-fresh pickles. It could have been a mess. It wasn't. It was, in fact, deeply satisfying. */ 3924 Isabella Ave., Oakley, (513) 531-2500*

8

The 7 Minute Burger
PAULA'S GOURMET CAFÉ
$6.95

➡ A sign in the window of Paula's Gourmet Café says that the lunch hotspot has "downtown's biggest and best burger." The 7 Minute Burger just might live up to that claim. Made of hand-patted ground chuck, it's grilled

THE GAME PLAN

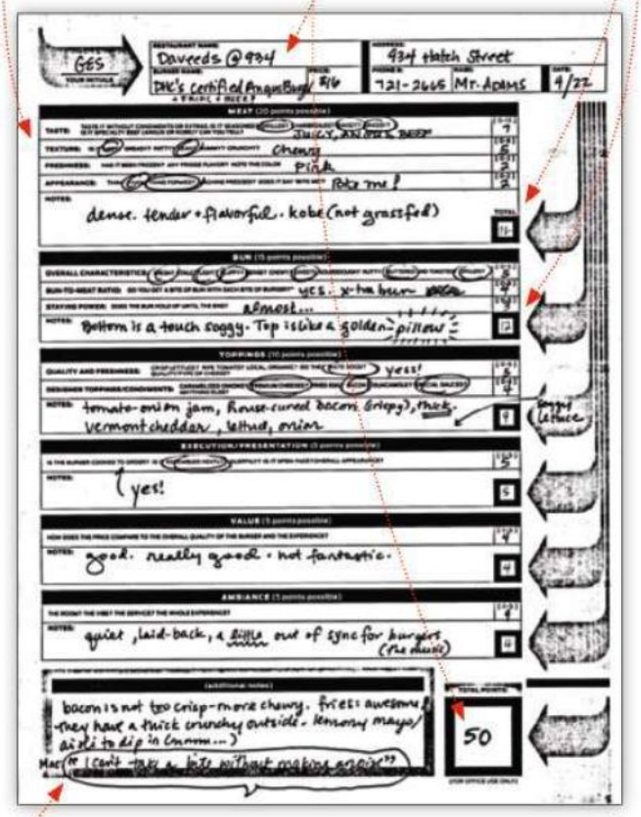
Rating the best burgers in town seems like a daunting task. Luckily, our staff was up to the challenge. Led by Dining Editor Donna Covrett, who whipped up a list of more than 50 possibilities, our editorial staff fanned out across the city, armed with score sheets designed by Art Director Grace E. Saunders. On those sheets were the components we would evaluate (determined by Covrett after much thought and discussion): the meat, the bun, the toppings, the execution and presentation, the value, and the ambience. The perfect score? Sixty points. Only 40 spots were deemed good enough to make our list.

THE DETAILS: *With so many places and so many tasters, keeping track of who went where when—plus all the addresses, prices, and phone numbers—was made easier by having all the info up top.*

EVALUATING: *To help the tasters assign points, Covrett included lists of questions to consider with every scored item.*

SCORING: *Because the meat and the bun are so crucial to a great burger, those items accounted for just over half the possible points.*

ADDING IT UP: *Covrett tabulated all the scores to come up with the rankings you see on these pages. The notes also helped her construct the "Franken-burger" shown on page 65.*



OTHER STUFF: *There's more to the experience than just a burger, so Saunders left space for tasters to take notes. Plus, we knew we wanted to include a list of great sides with the burgers, so tasters were told to look for the interesting, unusual, and just plain great.*

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to juicy perfection and placed on a wheat bun from Shadeau Bakery. Top with grilled balsamic-laced onions or sautéed mushrooms, and you can see why the concept of understating on their reach and over-delivering on taste works. */ 41 E. 4th St., downtown, (513) 381-3354*

9

Keystone Burger
KEYSTONE BAR & GRILL
$7.99

You know Keystone is doing something right when they get rid of their onion rings—which were delicious—because they want to serve only house-made fare and the rings weren't. But they're *really* doing something right when they can make a burger like this—a half-pound of quality beef served with fresh tomato, lettuce, and red onion on a chewy and toasted sesame seed bun. */ 313 Greenup St., Covington, (859) 261-6777*

10

Senate Burger
SENATE
$12

We love this brawny, cheddar-and-caramelized-onion slathered burger, hand-formed from Angus ground beef and charred over a wood-fired grill. Beneath the umbered dome of bun made by Giminetti Bakery, the sweet and smoky patty plays nice with slices of Roma tomatoes, crisp lettuce, and house-made pickles. It arrives speared with one adorable gherkin (also house-made), and in the company of truffled and thyme-flecked fries ($5). We nominate it for Senate's majority leader. */ 1212 Vine St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 421-2020*

11

The Black Angus Burger
DAVEED'S
$16

Visit on Thursdays—burger night—and get a plate full of goodness, from the house-made smoky-sweet tomato-onion jam to the house-ground Angus tenderloin. Don't pass up the buttery-crisp-outside, creamy-and-fluffy-inside truffle Parmigiano fries and their tangy, lemony (also homemade) mayonnaise—an indecently good side (think the deli scene in *When Harry Met Sally*). */ 934 Hatch St., Mt. Adams, (513) 721-2665*

12

Cheeseburger
SLEEPY HOLLOW INN
$7.95

Every day is a holiday at this roadside tavern. Burger-wise, they've got plenty of reason to celebrate: a moist half-pound of meat with delicate seasoning and distinct charbroiled flavor is topped with lettuce, tomato, pickle, onion, and a toasted-but-soft sesame seed bun. With a more flavorful tomato, it's got the potential to make Sleepy Hollow a legend. */ 378 Bridge St., Loveland, (513) 677-0290*

13

Angus Beef Burger
GABBY'S CAFÉ
$8.49

Wyoming is known for good schools, good housing stock, and now, good burgers. Gabby's Angus beef burger is a smoky half-pounder made sweeter with a buttery bun that's neither too soft nor too hard. Savor the fresh pickles, lettuce, and tomato on this tender monument to meat. */ 515 Wyoming Ave., Wyoming, (513) 821-6040*

This page: Senate's kitchen; the Senate Burger. Opposite page: Daveed's Black Angus Burger and chef David Cook.

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SUPERIOR SIDES

Six go-withs worthy of star status.

Potato Salad, *Wildflower Café*
Never the same way twice, and always picnic perfect, Chef Todd Hudson changes up this creamy mayonnaise-based potato salad according to what's on hand.

Seasoned Fries, *Ollie's Trolley*
Fennel, crushed red pepper, paprika...coriander? Half the fun of Ollie's fantastic fries is figuring out the "secret" seasoning, the other half is inhaling them.

Duck Fat Fries, *Chalk Food + Wine*
The Holy Grail of fried potatoes, chef Mark Bodenstein's are crisp sticks of fully-flavored, smoky-and-sea-salty righteousness.

Truffle Fries, *Senate*
You may come for Senate's burger or hot dogs, but you'll stay for the chubby batons of truffle-laced fries freckled with thyme.

Sweet Potato Fries, *Virgils*
They're the familiar bagged and frozen variety appearing all over town, but Chef Matt Buschle gives them an added kick with salt and white pepper, and ancho chili mayo for dipping.

Onion Rings, *Zip's Café*
We'll say it again: Beer batter + rings of sweet white onion + fresh hot oil = the perfect partner for a burger and beer. —D.C.

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14

Green Acres Burger
LAVOMATIC
$11.49

The mantra at Lavomatic is "keep it local," and Chef Brad Bernstein's Green Acres burger does. The half-pound of beef (grass-fed, organic) comes from Greenacres Farm. The bacon is from Eckerlin's Meats. The bun (fresh, slightly sweet, and built to last) is baked in the Relish Group's commissary. Even the ample schmear of Boursin is made in-house. It all combines to make a lean, thick, juicy feast. */ 1211 Vine St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 621-1999*

15

The Barnsdale
THE ROOKWOOD
$12

You will definitely get your hands dirty when you tackle this one—it even outlasts its own bun. Pickles enhance the meat's tangy flavor, and the gooey fontina cheese, sweet caramelized onions, and thyme aioli make this a burger worth dreaming about. Try it with the Grippo fries, seasoned with the chipmaker's salty-sweet barbecue coating. */ 1077 Celestial St., Mt. Adams, (513) 421-5555*

16

Garlic Burger
FRIENDLY STOP
$5.50

This burger gets its mellow flavor from a mound of sautéed garlic served atop a fresh, hand-formed patty. The cornmeal-dusted kaiser roll it's served on stands up nicely to the demands of the burger's juices. And when we tasted this in April, the tomato was pretty good—not homegrown, but not plastic, either. */ 985 Congress Ave., Glendale, (513) 771-7427*

17

Boursin Cheeseburger
ARTHUR'S CAFÉ
$9

If heaven has a burger joint, it'll feel like Arthur's patio—friendly and inviting. Fries come with the lean, grilled-to-order eight-ounce patty for $7.50; for a bit more, you can trick it out with a special cheese, such as an *à la mode* scoop of garlicky Boursin. On our visit, the mildly-seasoned meat didn't hold its own against the cheese, and the plump bun—high on top, thin on the bottom—lost its grip. But we're guessing that'll be different in heaven. */ 3516 Edwards Rd., Hyde Park, (513) 871-5543*

18

Federal Hill
ANDERSON TOWNSHIP PUB
$7.95

You can still sense 1982 lurking in the neon and brick decor, but the service here is plenty up to date. Named for Anderson Township subdivisions, the lean, juicy, chargrilled burgers come on Servatii buns with a variety of toppings, including horseradish cheese. For a side, stick with the pub fries—they're freshly cut and delicious. */ 6694 Clough Pike, Anderson Twp., (513) 231-0601*

19

Wheels Burger
CAFÉ DE WHEELS
$5

Cincinnati's first mobile burger truck delivers a hot and juicy burger on a soft Servatii kaiser bun, enrobed in perfectly melted cheese, sweet and piquant balsamic onion marmalade, and spicy mayo. It's one of the best things to happen to wheels since rubber. */ To find the Café on any given day, go to www.cafedewheels.com or call (513) 549-5246.*

20

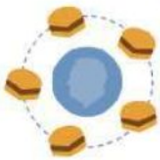
The Ollie Burger
OLLIE'S TROLLEY
$3.95

Don't say we didn't warn you: The Ollie Burger is sloppy. The special Ollie sauce—a mayonaise-based concoction more runny and tangy than the "special sauce" you'd find on a Big Mac—will, given half a chance, drip down the chin and onto one's lap. But we predict you'll put up with it. Seasoned with a dry rub and a mixture of Parmesan cheese, paprika, garlic, and

The Ascent of the Slider

Since its birth nearly 90 years ago, the Slider—the junior-junior-sized burger first developed by White Castle—has been everything to everyone, going from fast food to upscale amuse bouche. But true fans know that—foie gras and hoity-toity French chefs be damned—this cheap eat is firmly rooted in ground beef and the Midwest. A short history of this big little burger. —Ian Aldrich

1921
Billy Ingram founds White Castle in Wichita, Kansas, introducing a tiny, flat beef patty steamed and served with onions on a bun to the world. It is quickly dubbed "The Slider."



1932
Lines form early on June 3 at a White Castle in St. Louis for a five-burgers-for-10-cents special. And lo, the sack is born.

SLIDER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Gordo's Hawaiian Burger—a real mouthful.

onion powder, the Ollie Burger tastes like home. / *1601 W. Central Ave., West End, (513) 381-6100*

21

The Bawe Burger
BOOTSY'S
$15

Add breakfast to a slider and wave the Ruby magic wand over it, and you get the Bawe (pronounced *bow-wee* and named after General Manager Bawe Shinholster) Burger. Cheddar cheese, steamed onions, hand-sliced maple bacon, and a poached egg top the highly seasoned beef patty stacked between a soft but substantial bun. It's rich, robust, and *so* Jeff Ruby. / *631 Walnut St., downtown, (513) 241-0707*

22

The Godzilla Burger
HABITS CAFÉ
$8.25

Habits has all the hallmarks of a fine pub, so it makes sense that it's also got a helluva good burger. The Godzilla Burger sneaks up on you because it lacks the standard red-green visuals. The smoky, zingy jalapeño mayo, pepper-jack cheese, and pile of spicy onion straws (the epitome of delicately fried excellence) are, admittedly, different. (In a word: beige.) And yes, we could have used a smidge more umami. But that's why God invented ketchup. / *3036 Madison Rd., Oakley, (513) 631-8367*

1934 White Castle relocates its corporate headquarters to Columbus, Ohio.

1947 Genius! Cincinnatian Earl Howell discovers how to speed up the cooking of ground beef by punching five small holes into the patties.

1961 Eat it, Ray Kroc! White Castle sells its billionth sandwich.

1970 White Castle patents the Meat Horn, a machine designed specifically for poking those five holes into long rolls of slider beef.

1988 Sliders make their first appearance in supermarket freezers.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JUDE BUFFUM

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THE GREAT DEBATE

What's the difference between corn-fed and grass-fed?

Recent studies show that beef from cattle raised in feedlots on a corn and grain diet (primarily soybean meal) may be a problem for our health, the environment, and the animals themselves. Our two cents? We've eaten some memorable corn-fattened beef, but the mounting evidence of health and environmental risks have influenced the way we purchase meat. And honestly, some of the best flavored meat we found in our burger quest turned out to be from pasture-raised beef cattle. So do your taste buds (and your waistline) a favor and seek out some prime grass-fed meat. —D.C.

	Grass-Fed	Corn-Fed
How to tell:	Rich, more varied flavor; chewier texture	Well-marbled, tender meat
Why?	Four times the amount of vitamins A and E; more than twice the amount of omega-3 fatty acids and CLAs (a healthy fat thought to be a cancer inhibitor).	Controlled environment makes for a more consistent product—and in a country that consumes millions of pounds of burgers a year, consistency is key.
Problems:	More difficult to control cows' diets and takes a longer time for them to fatten.	Higher in total fat and calories. Genetically modified grains, protein supplements, antibiotics, and growth hormones fatten cows quickly, which boosts productivity and lowers costs...but could result in health issues for meat eaters down the road.
Benefits:	Lower in fat and calories by as much as one-third. With controlled grazing, native perennial grasses get propagated, invasive weeds are controlled, and the land is fertilized.	Faster production equals a higher profit margin for the feedlot, and cheaper meat for the consumer.
Is it good for the cows?	Cows get more exercise, which in turn creates leaner beef. Which is good for humans, too.	Can cause "feedlot bloat" or subacute acidosis (essentially, bad gas and heartburn); left untreated, either could cause death.

1994

Back off copycats! White Castle finally embraces the 73-year-old nickname for its burgers (well, sort of) by trademarking the word "Slyder." The weird spelling doesn't take.

1995

Satisfying that innate desire all Americans have to eat fast food and give their car that clean, fresh smell at the same time, White Castle hands out free air fresheners with each sack of Sliders.

1996

The little sandwich finds the big city when Sassy's Sliders opens its doors on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. "Better than Botox," one food critic opines.

2003

Universe, meet the Crave Crate. Size: 100 Sliders.

2004

Eat it, Big Mac. The Slider goes Hollywood with the release of *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle.* Total gross: $18 million, or roughly 3.6 million sacks of Sliders.

SLIDER PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHITE CASTLE

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Clockwise from left: City View Tavern; digging in; the Big Ted Deluxe and a Bloody Mary; ready for delivery

23

Zip's Burger with Cheese

ZIP'S CAFÉ

$5

Zip's burgers are misshapen and lumpy and ours came with way too much white onion. But thanks to the meat magicians at Avril-Bleh & Sons, the local butcher shop that delivers daily, Zip's burgers are entirely fresh and undeniably delicious. Same goes for the Klosterman Baking Company bun they sit on, too. Plus, the electric choo-choo train that circles the room will transfix your 2-year-old while you wait. */ 1036 Delta Ave., Mt. Lookout, (513) 871-9876*

24

Zola Burger

ZOLA PUB & GRILL

$7.25

It's meat overload, but the ham and bacon crowning this patty lend fat and flavor to the lean, somewhat dry beef, as do the mushrooms, onion, and American cheese. The toasted kaiser bun stands up to all that admirably. Try the Asian slaw—it's like potluck ramen salad. Wednesday at Zola is Burger Mania and burgers are just $6. */ 626 Main St., Covington, (859) 261-7510*

25

The Bison Burger

CHALK FOOD + WINE

$11.75

Nearly militant in his call for all things seasonal and local, Chef Mark Bodenstein's burger is what you might expect: Ground Kentucky bison accessorized with white cheddar, purple onion, and super fresh arugula between thin slices of buttered and toasted house baked bread. And speaking of militant, we will fight you for the last of the compulsively edible duck fat fries. */ 318 Greenup St., Covington, (859) 643-1234*

26

Hamburger

FIVE GUYS

$4.49

On the very short list of "chains that don't taste chain-y," Five Guys ranks pretty high. Cooked to order, the regular hamburgers here come with two patties of fresh ground beef bursting with meaty-juicy goodness. We took the no frills route (lettuce, tomato, pickles, mustard, ketchup); if you're feeling adventurous, try their fine alternate toppings: jalapeños, green peppers, grilled onions, grilled mushrooms, and even A-1 sauce. And they don't skimp on their fresh-cut fries, which is always appreciated. */ Five area locations; www.fiveguys.com for info*

27

100% Natural Beef Burger

MARIBELLE'S TAVERN

$10

A word of well-meaning if persnickety advice: A $10 burger deserves better com-

2006

David Falk births a slider at Boca: Ground filet mignon, jalapeño pesto, sautéed onions, and one carefully guarded secret ingredient. OK, it's Velveeta. Sorry foodies!

2006

They don't call 'em sliders but L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon at the Four Seasons Hotel in New York City puts a mini beef and foie gras burger on its menu. Price: $35 for two.

2009

White Castle sells 560,063,377 Sliders in one year.

2009

Kobayashi who? Competitive eating champion "Notorious" B.O.B. Shoudt sets a world record by eating 37.5 sliders at the Roy Rogers World Roast Beef Slider Eating Championship. Time: 8 minutes.

2010

To celebrate National Hamburger Month in May, White Castle starts selling Slider-scented candles. (Gas masks not included.) By May 7 they were sold out of all 10,000. Really.

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pany than kettle cooked chips (or coleslaw, or a little boat full of cottage cheese). However, at Maribelle's you do get hormone-free beef, grilled to order, on a fantastically nutty, slightly sweet bun from Giminetti, and a selection of toppings that include goat cheese and guacamole. Don't miss the housemade pickles, served on the side. */2062 Riverside Dr., East End, (513) 861-2484*

28

Quarter Pound Burger with Cheese Deluxe
DORIS AND SONNY'S HOMELIKE RESTAURANT
$4.25

"Wanna know the secret?" Kent Hugentobler, the proprietor, cook, "main dishwasher and everything else" at Doris and Sonny's asks. "You grill the bun. It adds flavor and when you put condiments on it, it doesn't soggy out, for lack of a better word." Well said, Mr. Hugentobler. Anyone in the mood for a pleasingly sloppy, salty, crunchy, juicy, hand-patted, griddle-fried burger with perfectly melted American cheese and all the classic toppings—well, get thee to Miamitown. But take note: the Homelike is only open for breakfast and lunch. */ 6856 State Route 128, Miamitown, (513) 353-9828*

29

Black & Bleu Boy Burger
HAMBURGER MARY'S BAR & GRILLE
$10

We chose the extravagantly egg-y brioche bun to pair with the Black & Bleu Boy Burger, a flamboyant offering of epic (half-pound) proportions that comes with fries. Soft and sweet, the bun was a nice counterpoint to the crusty blackened exterior and the tang of bleu cheese crumbles scattered on top. But our "medium rare" arrived virtually mooing, and topped with bacon that seemed to have been cooling its heels in the kitchen for some time. Where's Mary when you need her? */ 909 Vine St., downtown, (513) 421-6279*

30

The Quarter Burger
QUARTER BISTRO
$11

This burger demands your full attention. The moist, fresh meat comes on a chewy, slightly nutty bun, surrounded by thin, crispy fries. It's a handful. We only wish our server paid us as much attention to us as we paid to our dinner. */ 6904 Wooster Pike, Mariemont, (513) 271-5400*

31

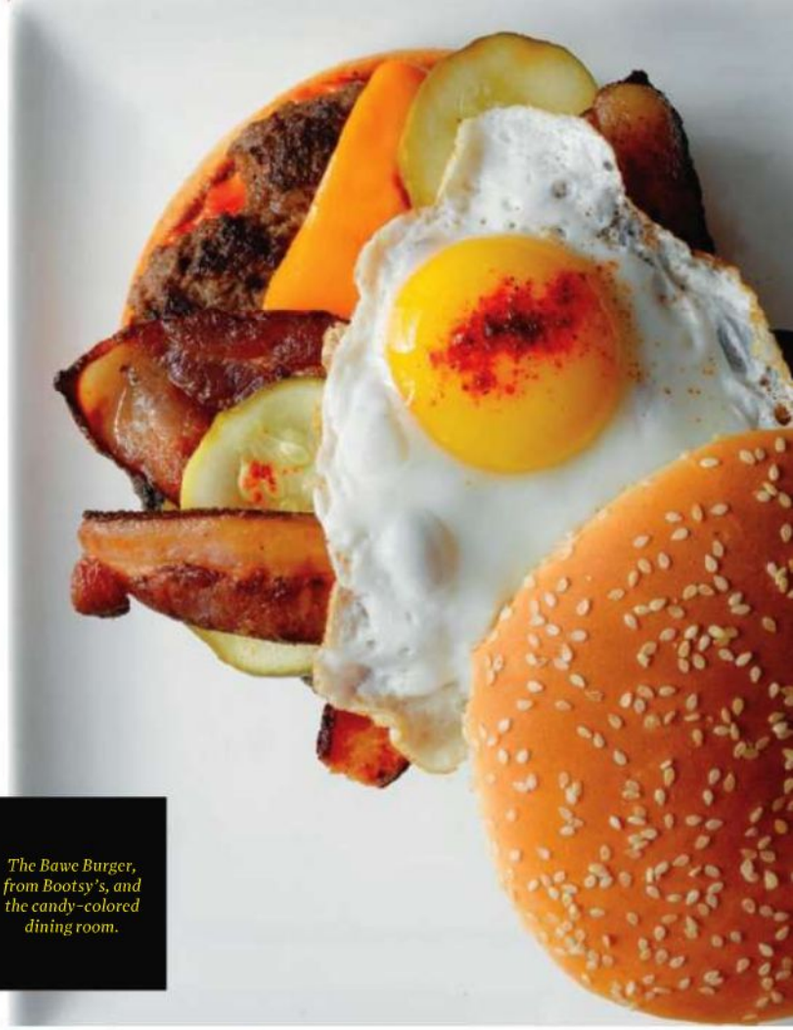
Cheeseburger
QUATMAN CAFÉ
$4.50

Even on a Friday in Lent, the crowd in this local legend is all about the beef—that is, the cheeseburger, which arrived as plain as a parish priest: open-faced, unadorned except for pickle slices and a disk of onion. The medium-thick patty needs salt to bring out the meaty flavor. Most diners round out the meal with a side of crisp shoestring fries. Nobody's giving them up for Lent, either. */ 2434 Quatman Ave., Norwood, (513) 731-4370*

32

Black & Bleu Burger
SKINNY LEGS PUB & GRILL
$6.95

The Cajun spices added to the Angus beef give this burger a spicy crust, cut by a generous dollop of bleu cheese dressing. Unfortunately, our bun was overtoasted, rendering it almost stale, but our sassy



The Bawe Burger, from Bootsy's, and the candy-colored dining room.

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waitress more than made up for it. / *519 Fairfield Ave., Bellevue, (859) 261-5111*

33

Sammy's Burger
SAMMY'S GOURMET BURGERS & BEERS
$8.95

➡ Do not fear the fried egg atop this signature sandwich. It comes with bacon, too. And mozzarella cheese. And "Sammy Sauce" (ketchup mixed with mayo). With a foundation of Angus beef, it's a delicious hot mess of a burger, one that no bun in the world could stand up to, though this honey kaiser tries. Ask for more napkins and carry on. / *4767 Creek Rd., Blue Ash, (513) 745-9484*

34

The Burger
MAYBERRY
$8

➡ A Lilliputian seven-table cafe serving a behemoth 12 ounces of seasoned Angus beef in baroque dress—pepper bacon, onion marmalade, and a poached egg barely enclosed by a buttered brioche bun—but with the soul (and texture) of your grandmother's meatloaf. So much so, we broke from our mayonnaise preference and anointed it with ketchup. / *915 Vine St., downtown, (513) 381-5999*

35

Gordo's Burger
GORDO'S PUB AND GRILL
$8

➡ This modest pub serves an immodestly sized, bulbous burger stacked with roasted poblano chilies, sautéed mushrooms, onions, smoked bacon, garlicky Boursin cheese, and mayonnaise. It's a good burger that would have been a great burger had

THE FRANKEN-BURGER?

→ As our intrepid reporters gathered and deconstructed their close encounters of the burger kind, we could see a real whopper taking shape. It's a big mac daddy, so you might need an extra set of hands. OK, enough puns. But definitely bring lots of napkins. — D.C.

Pretzel bun, Wildflower Café *It's the only bun out of 50 that had us pulling out our iPhone and looking for places to buy it. (We know where!)*

Red onion and tomato jam, Green Dog Café *Sweet...*

Jalapeño mayo, Habit's Café *...and subtle heat.*

Crisp Iceberg, Gas Light Café *Greens with crunch.*

Arugula, Chalk Food + Wine *Greens with punch.*

Fried Egg, à la The Black Sheep *On top of bacon? Breakfast burger!*

Maple bacon, Lavomatic and Bootsy's *Sweet, smoke, salt, and snap.*

Slice of red, ripe tomato from your local farmers' market *If we have to explain this one, you're not getting a bite.*

Grilled onions, Oakley Pub & Grill *Char, tang, and slick.*

Spicy onion straws, Habit's Café *They make our boss happy. We like our boss happy.*

House-cured pickles, Maribelle's Tavern *The right amount of bite and crunch.*

White cheddar, Chalk Food + Wine *Rich and robust without being too sharp or dry.*

Boursin, Lavomatic Café *Garlic, herbs, and ooze.*

House-ground and seasoned Angus tenderloin, Daveed's *Hello? Filet Mignon?*

Burgundy wine sauce with wild mushrooms and truffle, Terry's Turf Club *Because we think it should be classified as an aphrodisiac.*

Herb mayonnaise, Wildflower Café *Both voluptuous and demure, like Christina Hendricks on* Mad Men.

Shadeau Breads bun *Capable of doing the heavy-lifting, and tastes great, too.*

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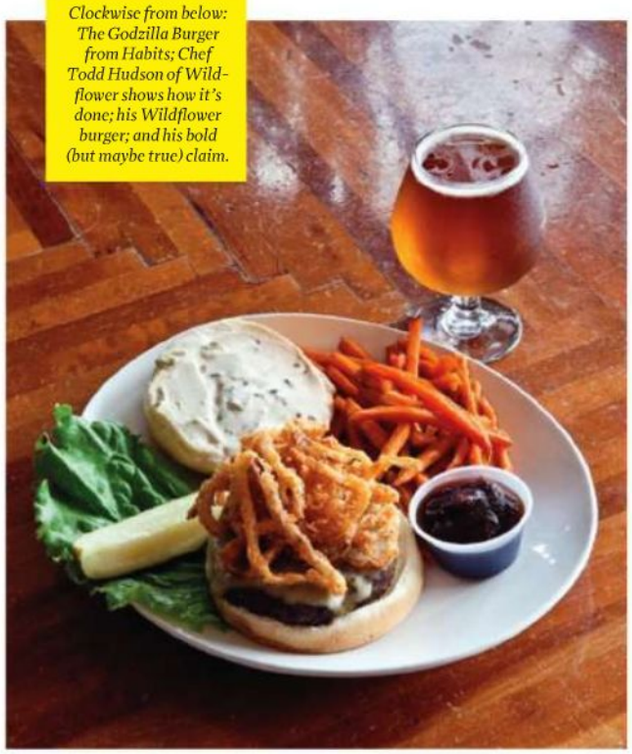

Clockwise from below: The Godzilla Burger from Habits; Chef Todd Hudson of Wildflower shows how it's done; his Wildflower burger; and his bold (but maybe true) claim.

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the medium rare we ordered not been served well done. / *4328 Montgomery Rd., Norwood, (513) 351-1999*

36

The Route 50 Burger
BY GOLLY'S
$7.50

➡ At By Golly's, the juicy patty—hand-formed and somewhat fatty, but with a great texture—came on a toasted bun, with wonderfully melted American cheese. The bonus: you won't feel like you've eaten half a cow (unless you pick one of their new, over-the-top burgers). They have hand-cut French fries, but do yourself a favor and try the crunchy waffle fries. / *714 Lila Ave., Milford, (513) 248-4444*

37

Fatburger with Cheese
FATBURGER
$3.89

➡ OK, all right, we know: It's a chain. But dig: the burgers are cooked to order, the meat is never frozen, and they'll even chargrill it if you want (just ask). Plus, these third-pound bundles of meaty joy come swaddled in a little paper napkin (so tidy!) with a bevy of toppings to choose from, including the snappiest pickle relish we've had in a long time. And they are duly proud of their house-made onion rings. Face it: If you want it fast, Fatburger puts the usual suspects to shame. / *3158 Madison Rd., Oakley, (513) 871-8722*

38

Bah Bah Black Sheep
THE BLACK SHEEP
$6.99

➡ A bar retrofitted in 1960s-style stools, '70s paneling, '80s green tile, and '90s slate, with chandeliers and drapes—we absolutely love the west side's charm. So who else would you expect to put goetta on their burger? And then bacon and a fried egg? Yep, the Black Sheep, that's who. / *3807 North Bend Rd., Cheviot, (513) 481-6300*

39

Everyday Angus
BLACK ANGUS BURGER AND BREWS
$7.99

➡ Take one cavernous cinderblock building in an industrial park, add a long glass-block bar lined with weathered, leathered bikers, 10 televisions showing the same ballgame with a backing soundtrack of an entire Coldplay album, and a good beefy burger cooked to order and crowned with melted cheese, red onion, lettuce, and tomato under a sturdy toasted kaiser bun, and you've got the oddest clash of cultures on our entire burger journey. / *10575 Chester Rd., Woodlawn, (513) 772-1500*

40

Black & Bleu Burger
915 PUB & GRILL
$6.75

➡ The menu here is reminiscent of the ones at Skinny Legs and Zola (the three restaurants share an owner), so you can count on a large Angus patty served on a toasted kaiser bun, the Cajun spice, and the dollop of blue cheese, as well as the Asian slaw and the Burger Madness deals. Just make sure you order your burger medium well, or you might get a pink surprise. / *915 N. Ft. Thomas Ave., Ft. Thomas (859) 441-1333*

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Six super veggie burgers.

Arthur's Café
Sitting outside on this neighborhood bar and grill's back patio, it's hard to find much fault in the world. So what if the spicy black bean burger tastes a tad processed? The white bun is sturdy and surprisingly flavorful and the pink salsa—salsa mixed with sour cream and mayo—is a nice complement to the fiery burger. / *3516 Edwards Rd., Hyde Park, (513) 871-5543*

Green Dog Café
A place like this (organic, sustainable, environmentally conscious) has to have a good veggie burger. The Green Dog Burger—garbanzo beans, mushrooms, walnuts, and herbs topped with baby arugula, finely shredded white cheddar—did not disappoint. The hand-formed, lightly pan-seared masterpiece has a nice crunch, and the red onion and tomato jam is a sweet addition. / *3543 Columbia Pkwy., Columbia-Tusculum, (513) 321-8777, www.greendogcafe.net*

What's For Dinner
A small chalkboard hanging behind the counter proclaims, "Veggie Burgers Made Here, By Hand, With Love." The thick patty of lentils, chickpeas, parsley, peanuts, onion, textured soy protein, and wheat gluten seared on a flat grill is flavorful on its own but a swipe of relish (or a homemade mustard, or barbecue sauce) would really help us feel the love. / *3009 O'Bryon St., O'Bryonville, (513) 321-4404, www.whatsfordinnerdeli.com*

Café De Wheels
What began as love at first bite quickly fell apart—literally—before bite number two. That said, the spicy basmati brown rice, beet, Chana dal bean, sunflower seed, mushroom, onion, carrot, egg concoction gets points for originality. We'll see each other again. / *www.cafedewheels.com*

Coffee Emporium
Served on a multi-grain kaiser roll, this black bean burger stayed true to form from start to finish. The crispy romaine lettuce and tomato give the sandwich a nice crunch and the ranch dressing and feta tone down its overall peppery chipotle flavor. / *Three area locations, including Over-the-Rhine. 110 E. Central Pkwy., Over-the-Rhine, 513-651-5483, www.coffee-emporium.com*

Melt Eclectic Deli
The Custom Burger is pretty darn good for "wheat meat," er, seitan, with sesame and fennel flavors served on a whole wheat hoagie with provolone cheese. Owner Lisa Kagen tops her sandwiches with organic, locally grown vegetables, and the burger is one of many vegetarian/vegan friendly items on the menu. / *4165 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 681-6358, www.meltcincy.com* —K.L.S.

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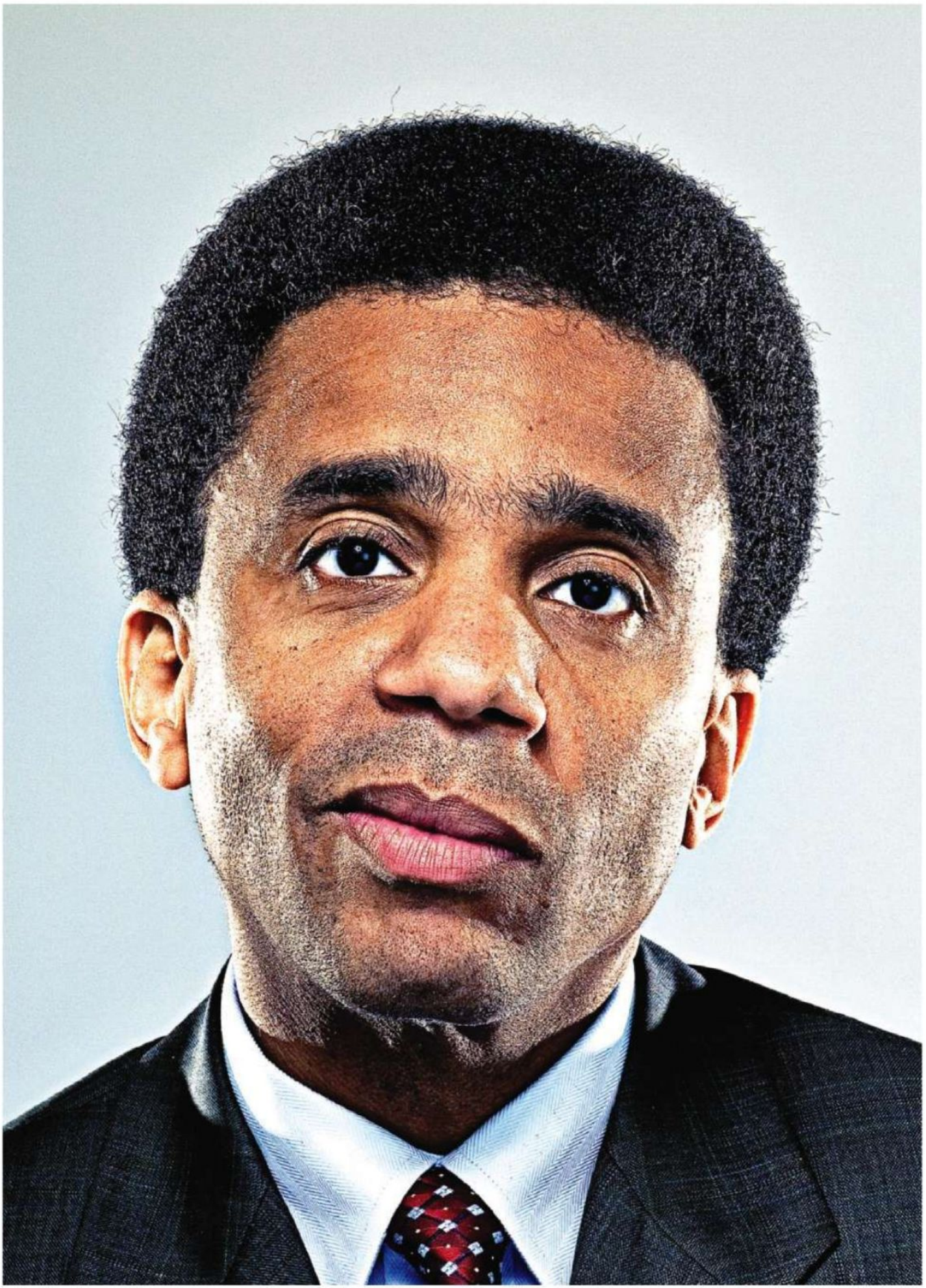

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HE SHALL OVER-COME

"Blunt, bold, and ambitious..."

"A smart-mouthed little punk...'"

"A transcendent man..."

"A controversy waiting to happen..."

"The greatest thing to happen to this city..."

BY **KATHY Y. WILSON**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **JONATHAN WILLIS**

It's easy to forget Christopher Smitherman's brash relentlessness is based on old-school Civil Rights tactics. But that doesn't make the NAACP president any easier to take.

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I can explain Christopher Smitherman.

Explaining a black man—an articulate, intelligent, aggressive, and yes, angry black man like the president of the Cincinnati chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—could be construed as a defensive waste of time. After all, the 44th president of these United States is black. Isn't that enough to satiate black America? *Enough already, crybabies.*

But hold it. Not when the Tea Party's fringe element spits "nigger" at Rep. John Lewis—a civil rights icon—for supporting health care legislation. Seems black maleness is still up for discussion.

The complexities and racism roiling within a black man's identity is an expansive history lesson extending back to William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, the brilliant turn-of-the-century intellectual and scholar, and an architect, in 1909, of the NAACP. Du Bois's seminal, semi-autobiographical 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk* is a treatise on and *explanation* of the black male. Du Bois arguably gave America its first extended gaze at a cosmopolitan, educated, handsome, and sometimes threatening black man. A post–Civil War Barack Hussein Obama, as it were.

Which brings us to Smitherman: He listed "president" as a life goal in his biographical statement to the League of Women Voters when he ran for Cincinnati City Council in 2003, back when Obama was still a funny-named state legislator from Illinois.

Love or loathe Smitherman, he's always got his eyes on the prize. It's part of who he is.

His parents are Dr. Herbert and Barbara Smitherman,

Ebony-elegant people who came of age during blacks' transition from colored to Negro; part of a generation of college-graduated "firsts"—first to live in white enclaves, to be named to civil service posts, to excel in academia. Herbert Sr. was the first black PhD hired by Procter & Gamble; a chemist, he holds several patents there. Barbara has a master's degree in education and worked for 30 years as an administrator throughout Cincinnati Public Schools. The accomplished Smithermans expected their six children—Herbert Jr., 50; James, 49; Albert, 48; Joe, 45; Christopher, 43; and Mae Angela, 42—to follow suit. To live The American Dream.

Today the Smithermans live that dream mostly in close proximity. Christopher's 101-year-old grandmother, Mozelle Flowers, and brother James live with Herbert Sr. and Barbara in North Avondale; Christopher, a financial planner, his wife, Pamela, and their five children live two houses away; Mae Angela, a high-ranking Ford Motor executive, bought the house in between, though she lives in Detroit. Albert lives on the other side of Christopher. Joe does kitchen and bathroom remodeling around the city. And Herbert Jr. is a Detroit physician who appeared on Obama's short list for Surgeon General.

When Smitherman landed the seventh seat on City Council in the 2003 election, his platform was racial healing and fiscal responsibility. He was an underdog who emerged from nowhere; a maverick before John McCain and Sarah Palin turned the word into a punch line. But the very assets that catapulted him onto council—hubris, fearlessness, and the bothersome persistence of a sweat bee—were the same things that ultimately did him in, sealing his reelection fate two years later: In 2005, Smitherman placed 11th, two notches below the top nine. In between, Smitherman set his sights on the NAACP chapter presidency, eventually wrestling it from then-president Edith Thrower in a tense, back-and-forth election that he only won after forcing a clandestine re-count. "It wasn't as much a struggle with Edith as it was with the business community," he says.

Not long after taking control of the NAACP, Smitherman sent out a press release headlined "MLK Day Should Be A Time For Introspection," which addressed what detractors have thought and whispered about him for years. "Cincinnati still believes that I need to get in my place because they see me as black," he wrote. "The status quo wants me at the table, but they do not want to hear me speak."

It is a sentiment he reiterated to me during one of two sit-downs. But it seems Smitherman *has* spoken. Loudly and repeatedly. In city council chambers, in ballot initiatives forged in cahoots with surprising political "allies," in protests against the Cincinnati Public School Board, in TV and radio rants. Though sometimes blurred by the bluster, he is actually waking the sleeping slave that is—or was—the Cincinnati NAACP and turning it back toward Du Bois's century-old edict of reckonable action toward white oppression, as well as political and economic advocacy for blacks in need. However Christopher Smitherman is perceived, he has brought it—the attention, the occasional approbation, the frequent exasperation, all of it—on himself. But that's only part of the explanation.

EXPLANATION NO. 1:

Christopher Smitherman is an action figure best experienced live.

Between his career at Smitherman Daley Financial Group, raising five kids with his wife, steering America's second-oldest NAACP chapter, and holding forth on his weekly radio show, it's a

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wonder Smitherman has energy to strategize and oversee the machinations of a pre-dawn protest.

But he does. And one day this past winter, he illustrated how it's done. Rolling up his sleeves to take on Cincinnati Public Schools for the district's attempts to "inflate the numbers and mislead the community" about the awarding of jobs and contracts for CPS's massive $700 million facility renovation, he starts by recruiting more than 30 NAACP members for an upcoming protest operation. During the call-in portion of the January 16, 2010, broadcast of *Smitherman on the Mic,* his radio show on 1230 AM WDBZ, he announces, cryptically: "Those that wanna be part of history call [the chapter's office]. We're gonna be locked shoulder-to-shoulder in solidarity. We're not gonna share the details here, but come [MLK Day] we'll be in solidarity."

Smitherman's inviting tone then turns cold with a warning. "If we get a leak and I figure out who leaked the information to the other side, I'm gonna publicly thrash you," he hisses. "Do not leak our information to the majority…if you leak this you will regret it. *I promise you.*"

I'm in. I leave my number at the NAACP offices, hoping to snag an invite to the event. Smitherman himself makes the late-night call. He registers surprise when he realizes it's me, the same Kathy Y. Wilson he knows is writing this very story about him. Then he gives me the location of the protest: Parham Elementary School in Evanston, a building undergoing renovation. On Martin Luther King Junior Day 2010, I head into the pre-dawn cold to witness another chapter in Cincinnati's postmodern Civil Rights movement unfold.

At stake: A more substantial portion of the facilities overhaul specifically for black—*not* merely minority—contractors and work crews. In January, CPS admitted it had committed "a clerical error" in reporting that $84 million had been awarded to minority (mostly Hispanic and Indian) contractors. The error: an $8.9 million contract to a white-owned company incorrectly counted among CPS's running tally of minority contractors. More tellingly, less than 2 percent (roughly $14 million) of the massive $700 million building/renovation budget was going to blacks.

"You can't say that's a clerical error—it's just false!" Smitherman said to his radio audience when the mistake came to light. "I want all of you who called in and said, 'I'm not seeing any minority contractors'—I want all you to know"—he paused for dramatic effect—"you're not crazy. You. Are. Not. Crazy."

Back to the scene:

With economic disparity as their ammo (that clerical error!), protestors convene at Unity Missionary Baptist Church on Fairfield Avenue in Evanston, right next to Parham Elementary, to sing hymns, pray, distribute signs, and plan who will stand nearest the protest site and what to do if Cincinnati police show up to arrest anyone. "When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun, Oh, Looord, haaaave mercy on me," we sing in unison.

Smitherman, head thrown back and fists thrust in the air, leads the song from the pulpit. (The 1985 School for Creative & Performing Arts grad has a beautiful voice, it must be said.) Heavily layered against the cold, the short, boyish Smitherman looks like he has raided his father's closet; even with a hoodie, a sweater, and an overcoat he appears slight. But that only disguises the fight within. "There's only two people in this room who—if they need to arrest somebody—can get arrested. That's me and Dock Foster," he says, referring to the Rev. Dock Foster, the dark, stout, white-haired pastor of Unity, president of the Baptist Minister's Conference, NAACP lieutenant, and a loyal, outspoken Smitherman supporter. It was Foster who reported the Kentucky and Indiana license plates of the all-white Parham work crew to the NAACP.

The choice of MLK Day for protest is more than symbolic: Not only should there be greater black inclusion in work crews, but those crews should not be working on this sacrosanct holiday. "How do they [reconcile] that their schools are shut down, their teachers are off, their students are off, but their construction goes on?" Smitherman says to the crowd, his voice rising. "We're gonna stand at those gates today and greet those Kentucky and Indiana construction workers! We can tell the world what [CPS] is doing with its billion-dollar project."

Outside the church, the construction site is quiet. Yet news trucks from channels 5, 9, and 12 are here, throwing their camera lights on the darkness. I make my way in the crowd to James Clingman, marketing consultant, founder of the African-American Chamber of Commerce, and NAACP economic development chairman. It was Clingman who went to the CPS offices, asked to see the construction rolls, and scrutinized the district's computerized records over the shoulder of the manager of supplier diversity.

"It was all right there," Clingman tells me. Then he drills down to why the discrepancy has so enraged a contingency of the NAACP. "White folks can count their money in the CPS contracts but black folks can't because we're called 'minorities' along with two or three other groups of people," he says. "We have come to the point where the city of Cincinnati will see that we're dead serious about things and we won't be backed up. If anybody wants to go to work, sorry. Not today."

At 5:10 a.m. a police car rolls past; soon another cruiser is idling quietly across the street. Shortly before 6 a.m., former City Councilman Sam Malone, who came to show his support, says that CPS got wind of Smitherman's plan and "put word out to workers to shut the job sites down. So workers might not be showing up today." At 6 a.m. Smitherman makes an official press statement. Word comes back from Hughes Center, North Avondale Montessori, and the future School for Creative & Performing Arts that workers have arrived. At 6:30 a.m. a decision is made: The protestors will go and investigate the other sites. I leave, knowing Smitherman has many more ways to flog CPS.

Smitherman majored in drama at SCPA,

and his education has served him well. He is • CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

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GIVE MY REGARDS TO FACEBOOK

BY AIESHA D. LITTLE

REMEMBER PENS *AND* PAPER?

LANDLINES *and* **VHS?**

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WELL, WE KNOW A WOMAN WHO TOOK A SEVEN-DAY BREAK FROM 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY…**AND LIVED!** THIS IS THE TALE OF HER SHORT, UNHAPPY, *LOW-TECH LIFE.*

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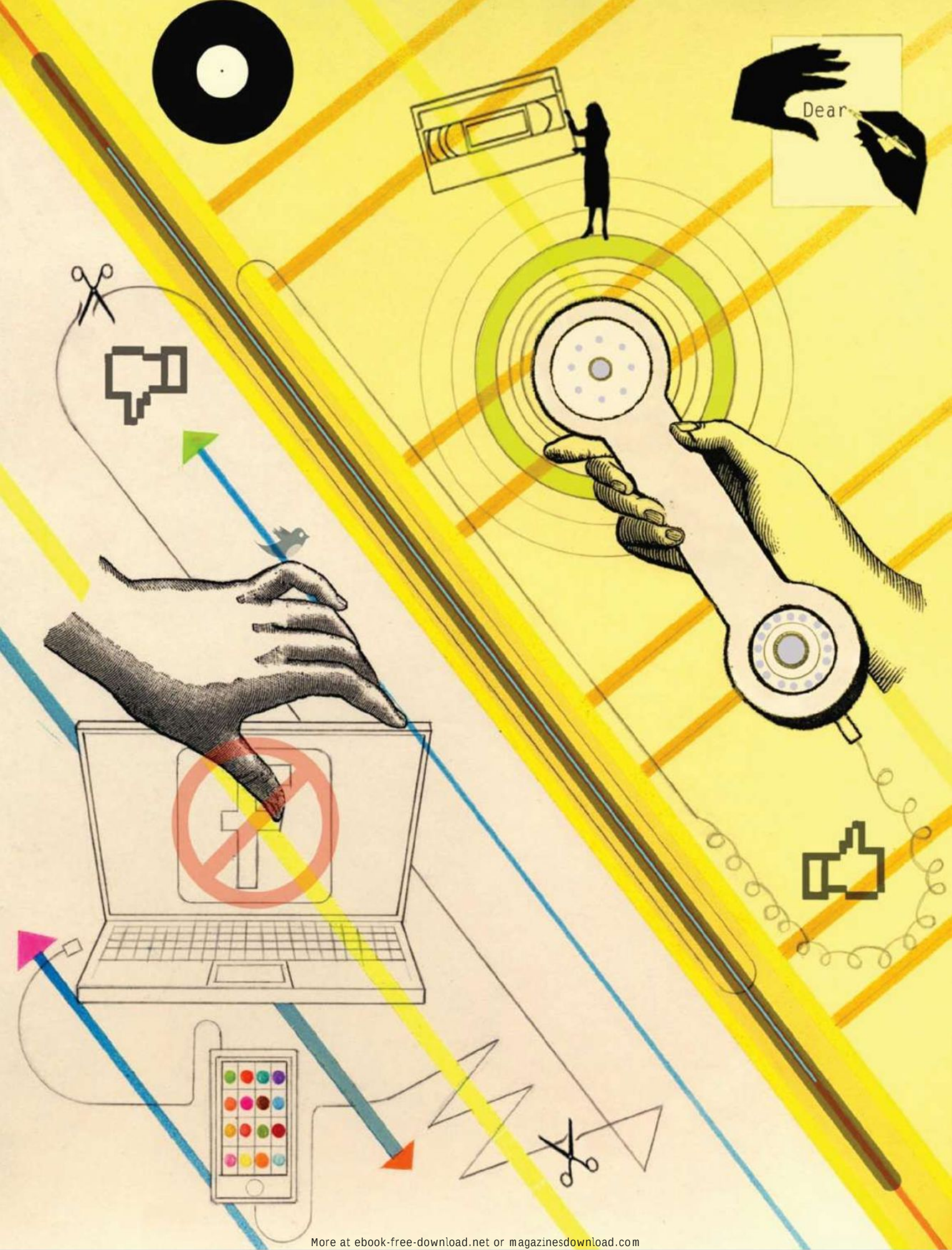

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A FEW DAYS AFTER Christmas, I booted up my laptop and was greeted with "WARNING! YOUR COMPUTER IS INFECTED!" in giant, blood red letters. My stomach twisted the way it does just before I throw up. I dialed my cousin, Mark, in Nashville, a computer guy who rebuilds laptops and desktops from scratch, and his first question was jarring in its simplicity: "What kind of antivirus software are you running?"

"Uh," I hedged, feeling dumber by the second, "I don't know." I really didn't know. Some software had been installed at the time I purchased the laptop a year and a half ago. That meant it was still valid, right? Apparently not. By letting my antivirus software expire, I opened myself up to all kinds of troubles, namely identity theft. I'd read the horror stories about hackers using viruses to steal Social Security numbers and credit card info to purchase everything from sneakers to cars. *Crap,* I thought. *What if someone's stealing my identity right now?!?*

"Mail it to me tomorrow," Mark said, clearly trying to comfort me, even though I could tell by his tone that he was annoyed. "I'll have it fixed and back to you in no time."

After we hung up, I spent the next two hours dusting the knickknacks in my living room and cleaning my hardwood floors, unsure of what to do with myself. I went out and bought a new computer the very next day.

Surviving a few days without the Internet should be no problem. But you see, my computer is the central nervous system of my house. It is the sun and everything rotates around it. I pay bills online. I'm constantly uploading videos and photos to Facebook and YouTube. When I'm sick, I can work from home because I have access to my company e-mail account. And I haven't used my DVD player in months; why should I when I can pop movies into my CD-RW drive? I don't have cable, and thanks to the streaming goodness of Netflix and Hulu, I don't need it. (I'm not alone. An April report from the Toronto-based Convergence Consulting Group stated that 800,000 households cancelled their cable and satellite accounts in favor of watching TV online last year.)

I'm in a precarious situation, one that many people of a certain age and/or socioeconomic status can relate to. I'm not a Luddite who disdains the existence of today's technological advances, but I'm not a technophile either. I don't own an iPod, I don't have GPS in my car, and I only use my cell phone for phone calls and the occasional text message. I still own a turntable and vinyl records. The economy being what it is, it's highly unlikely that there's an iPad in my foreseeable future. (And because I write for a magazine, that's a problem: Some predict that the iPad *is* my future.) I'm sure that there's a whole segment of the population living in this techno limbo with me. We remember the days when the size of a cell phone made it look like part of a moon rover and when switching from Betamax to VHS meant you had *arrived*. We feel nostalgic for an era when newfangled technology was a sign of luxury, not necessity.

In my estimation, things went completely haywire somewhere in the mid-1990s. In 1995, I was a college freshman. I don't remember anyone in or outside of my circle of friends having cell phones; in fact, only 13 percent of the country was using them at the time. The .edu e-mail account from my university was the first e-mail address I ever had. My computer? A generic, no-name brand with a nifty dot matrix printer. The DVD was still in its infancy, not yet available in the United States, and the marketing geniuses at Apple had yet to begin their Reign of Cool, in which they convinced the masses that the Mac is the hippest thing since sliced bread or toilet paper. It was all percolating, however, brewing right under our noses. We were on the precipice of a technology takeover and we didn't even know it.

Those of us who remember that primitive age are at once surprised and alarmed by what we've become with the onslaught of products and gadgets that have made our society more efficient and, at the same time, much more harried. The reasons some of us don't partake in all of these 21st-century creature comforts may vary—we're cheap, we're broke, we're into vintage on principle—but we have one thing in common: We aren't necessarily bothered by our technological shortcomings.

Or are we? What if I had to live without my computer? My cell phone? My DVD of *Berry Gordy's The Last Dragon*? Could

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I do it? The Great Laptop Meltdown of 2009 showed me that perhaps I couldn't. It was time to prove my mettle.

MY ALARM CLOCK BLARES, getting progressively louder each moment I don't move. When I finally roll over and slap the "off" button, the numbers 7:05 stare back at me. If this were a normal day, I'd get up, make some breakfast, and hop on the computer to start digging my way through yesterday's tweets and Facebook status updates like the weekend couch sloth I am. I'd watch the newest episode of *Grey's Anatomy* or *Fringe* on Hulu, stream a foreign film or two on Netflix, and settle in for a long, lazy Sunday. But today? Today, I turn over and go back to sleep.

Much to the pleasure of my editors and friends (all of whom seem to enjoy it when I torture myself for the sake of my craft), I have agreed to spend seven entire days living off the info-tech grid as much as humanly possible. In an attempt to live like I did before technology started taking over my life, I chose 1995 as the cutoff point. That means no cell phone calls, personal e-mail, or DVDs. Also, no Netflix, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, or Hulu. What do I have to prove? That I'm not a slave to technology; that I can take or leave all of this stuff. It'll be a piece of cake in some ways. In others? Not so much. I have three personal e-mail accounts (four total, if you include my work account); I'm an administrator on three Facebook pages; and I contribute to three Twitter feeds and two blogs. If I can pull this off, I can claim victory over the many ways in which I drive myself to distraction. At least temporarily.

The next time I look at my clock, it's 10:30 and I have to admit that I'm a little refreshed. But maybe I'm a bit recharged because I spent the previous day running around like a convicted felon trying to get her affairs in order before turning herself in for a lengthy prison sentence. On Saturday afternoon, I'd gone over the ways I could entertain myself without logging on to my computer: knitting, power walking, rollerblading through Spring Grove Cemetery, lunching with friends, reading a month's worth of back issues of *The New Yorker* and *New York* magazine, cleaning, and gardening. Anything I could do to keep my mind off the fact that I can't get on to my computer was up for consideration.

I AM CRANKY. EXTREMELY CRANKY. IT'S ONLY BEEN A DAY SINCE MY CONVERSATION WITH THE SLOW-DOWN GURU, AND THE ROSY GLOW OF MY LOW-TECH ZEN IS GONE.

The sky's the limit, really. I could finally put that second coat of paint on my bathroom walls. I could finish building the window seat for my living room. This could be a productive week! But two loads of laundry, one load of dishes, two magazines, and one long nap later, I'm beat. Again. It's exhausting pretending I don't want to go online. Is this what smokers feel like when they try to quit cold turkey?

When I meet my friend, Pat, a short while later at the Blue Wisp Jazz Club for the Jason Marsalis show, she grins evilly and asks if it's against the rules for me to look at *her* Facebook page. "I mean, if *I'm* looking at *my* page and you happen to be looking over my shoulder, that doesn't count, does it?"

I assure her that it does. I'm sure she won't be the only one to tempt me. It's—wait, did Jason Marsalis just send a text message during the piano player's solo? Great. It's only been a day and tech deprivation has me seeing things.

I'M BACK IN THE OFFICE on Monday and the hum of my Mac is soothing, its low, steady drone like a siren's song to which I'm unmistakably drawn. It's nothing more than white noise—precious, precious white noise—but it alerts me to a problem with the rules for this "low-tech/no tech" life. I have to work, and my work involves spending most of the day doing research and writing. On a computer. If the cutoff year for this experiment is 1995, how am I going to police myself? If I have to check when a website was created, isn't it cheating if it was created after 1995? Things are getting fuzzy.

I make a few mental concessions and my solution is to give up Google for the week, too. The site wasn't created until 2000, so I decide to use whatever was around before it. What was that again? It takes me a while to remember that Yahoo! was the search engine of choice before Google came along. The day flies by and I manage to stay on task with few interruptions. I don't check my personal e-mail. I don't use Google. I don't check Facebook or Twitter. After work, I head home, read a few stories in *The Best American Magazine Writing 2009,* and I'm in bed by 9:30.

I'm feeling pretty proud of myself until late Tuesday afternoon when I start to suffer a bit of Facebook withdrawal. I hate it, actually. Why? Because this assignment has made me realize how much time I waste on the social networking site. It's as if I have no real friends, just online "friends" with whom I can only bear to interact through the cold, hard glare of a computer screen. I'm disconnected without ever really having been connected in the first place.

To whom will I tell what I'm doing, where I'm going, and other information that really doesn't matter? I don't know if someone is hitting the "like" button on the photos of my new pumps or me sipping wine in Napa Valley. There's no one to whom I can ask arbitrary questions and get equally arbitrary answers. Who will smiley-face or LOL me when I say that the guy at the T-Mobile kiosk in Tower Place Mall is my new imaginary boyfriend? I am alone.

I told a few of my friends that I would be doing this experiment and gave them the number of my landline at home (yes, I still have a landline, but only because it's required for my security alarm system), yet no one has called to offer support, condolences, or even the briefest of conversations. Are we so busy that phone conversations have become passé? Then again, most of them weren't people I would chat on the phone with anyway. That would be weird because it's almost like I'd be bothering them. Am I being irrational?

I need a logical explanation for the way I'm feeling, so I contact Christopher Richards, creator • CONTINUED ON PAGE 136

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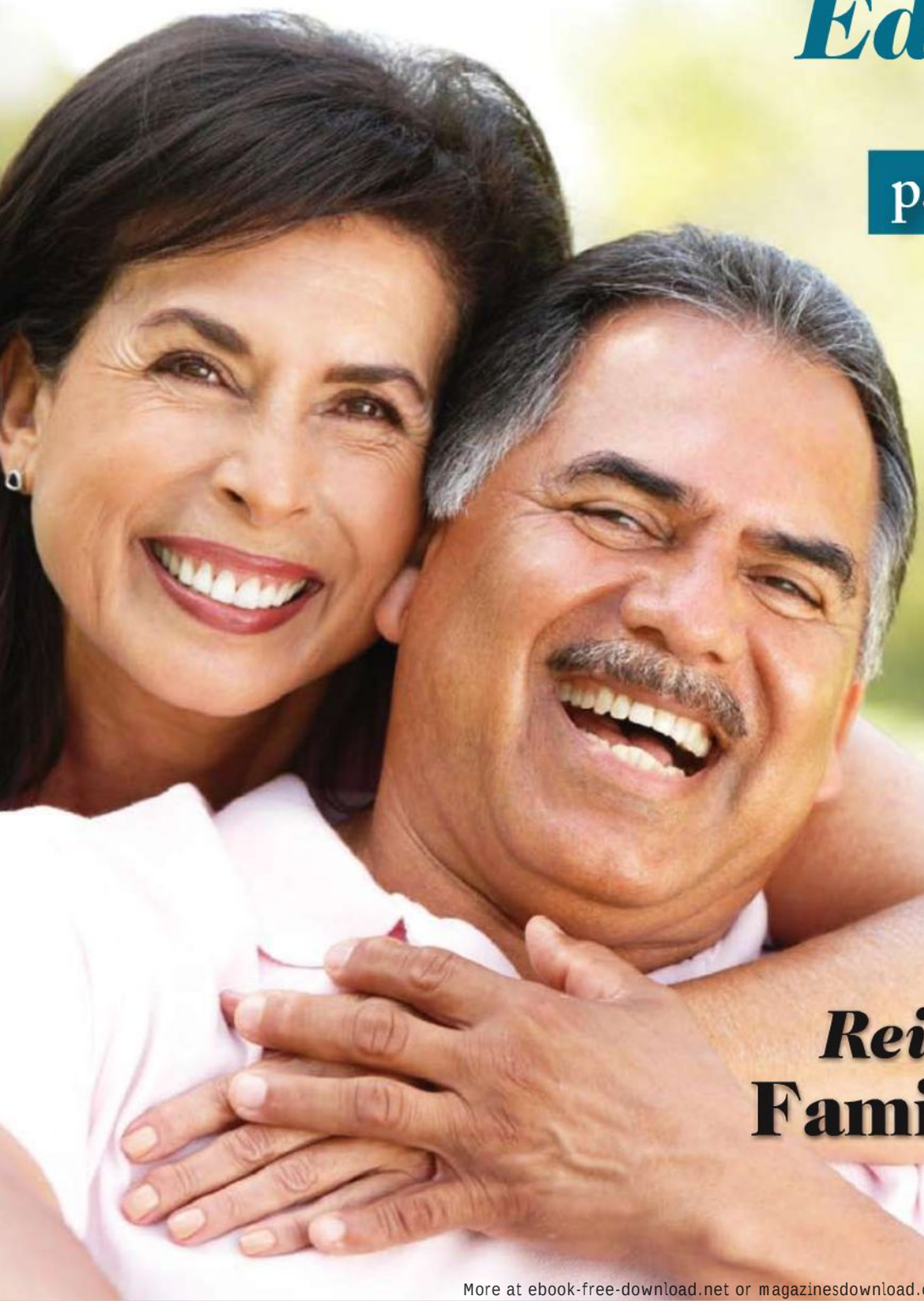

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Reinventing the Family Reunion

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When Mike McCurdy taught at Milford High School, his students often teased him by wearing fake noses and glasses. In keeping with this tradition, Mike and Kathy's entire family donned this costume for a family portrait. Mike and Kathy are in the back row wearing mauve.

The extended family—the Hutchinsons, Nitzschkes, McCurdys, Lyons, Millers, Heasleys, and Mollauns—prepare for the reunion portrait.

reinventing the

Family Reunion

How multiple generations are finding fun and making memories at home and away.

By Jennifer Hogan Redmond Photos by Keiser Photography

When Mike and Kathy McCurdy planned a family reunion at their Milford home last summer, they did just what they had done a few years earlier when they hosted Kathy's sister's wedding reception in the backyard. Except this time they didn't have the tent, the flowers or the formal wear. And this time their professional portraits included fake noses and glasses. After all, a reunion is supposed to be fun! For the McCurdys—whose extended family hails from Cleveland, Biloxi, Chicago and the West Coast—visiting their Cincinnati roots and visiting one-on-one with each other makes every generation happy.

A big anniversary, a milestone birthday, an impending move… any reason—or none at all—is a fine excuse to throw a family party. While there is no magic trick for controlling the weather or managing quirky personalities, the McCurdys and some creative local families have discovered how to plan reunions that delight everybody from grandparents to toddlers.

Plan Ahead

Whether your reunion is an afternoon barbecue on the deck, an all-inclusive cruise, or a week-long beach vacation, throwing it all together at the last minute is a bad idea and will do little to strengthen the familial bonds. For the greatest participation and overall success, begin the discussion nine months to a year in advance (essential if you're booking a cruise or renting high-demand property). Email is a great way to coordinate schedules and hash out ideas, but copy everyone on email responses and make sure all are informed. Keep in mind that older folks may prefer a phone call for such communication, so be sensitive to this need.

Very large groups, those with accessibility limitations (particularly those who depend on wheelchairs) and very specific needs and requests require particularly savvy planners. Linda Moloney of Beach Properties begins renting up to a year in advance for summer on South Carolina's Hilton Head Island. She notes that the newer,

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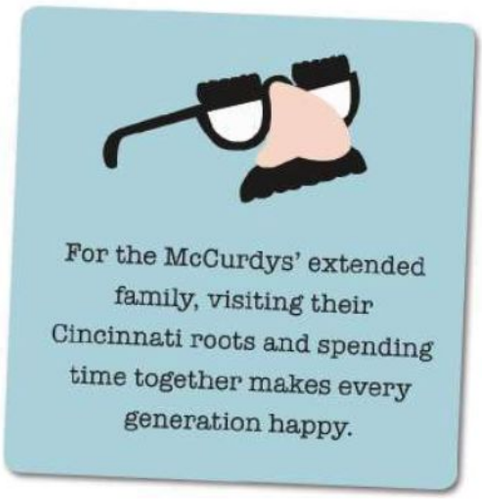
larger homes with amenities such as pools and elevators are snatched up quickly. Families preferring condominium units or smaller rentals in clusters have a bit more flexibility and choice, particularly on the island's Palmetto Dunes, Sea Pines and Forest Beach areas. Beyond the beach, some national and state park lodges or cabins are great values and super reunion spots but again, you need to reserve the space early.

Though last-minute cruise deals can be found, if you're planning for a group, it's best not to wait. Jackie Crowley, an outside agent working through Wayfarer Travel, notes that reserving multiple rooms on a ship can be challenging. Enlisting a tour company or travel agent who knows the inside story regarding specific arrangements and cruise lines can facilitate the process.

As for cost, "You pay the same whether you use an agent or not," when booking a cruise or a tour, Crowley says. Agents can also get special tour conductor credit or group discounts, adds Beth Baran of Travel Leaders. Sometimes an individual can get negotiated airfare rates through an agent as well, she says.



Keep it Simple

Traditional home-hosted family reunions can be a lot of work, but the McCurdys have learned over the years that simplicity is the key to a low-stress gathering. Last August, the McCurdys welcomed 32 relatives from 10 families throughout the country to their home for "a perfect weekend," Mike recalls. They planned outings (Reds games, trips to Eden Park, Skyline Chili and Graeter's) in smaller groups as each family arrived in town. The official reunion gathering, however, was a casual afternoon on their large backyard deck.

With Kathy's parents in their early 80s and the youngest child 5 months old at the time, the couple wanted no fuss over meals. "We do family, not food," Mike says. The children splashed in portable pools and enjoyed nearby ponds while the adults visited. What if it had rained? "It didn't," he laughs.

Weather worries can be eased by renting a tent or opting for a park shelter like members of the Bien clan. Julie Albanese and her cousin tackled a reunion for nearly 200 Bien relations. Many had never met each other. Working from her grandmother's original photo of 10 brothers and sisters, Julie tracked down relatives and invited all to a summer gathering at Sharon Woods. (You can also get help from www.ancestry.com.) Each branch of the family brought its own picnic. Organizers provided nametags, a sheet cake and a family tree. Sand pits, paddleboats and the park's other amenities were enough to entertain everyone for the day. For information on Cincinnati park shelters, check www.cincyparks.com. Keep in mind that the broad age range of participants really becomes important when you're planning activities. When the Weinberg family gathered in Texas in 2000, the weekend included an open-air train ride—in August. The two-hour tour was great fun for the 10- to 40-year-old crowd, but the near-record-high temperatures that summer were oppressive for the babies and grandparents.

By the way, simplicity can be achieved when you're away on vacation, too. Personal concierge services can help you hire a chef or have groceries delivered, Moloney says. Travel agents can connect vacationers with those services at their destination cities.

Cooperate

Some families have perfected the family reunion through trial and error. For 20 years, Scott and Chris Malach of Loveland have joined Scott's parents, five siblings and their families at the beach. Most of the week-long summer reunions have been spent on North Carolina's Outer Banks in a large home with a pool, a game room and accommodations for 24 family members. The home also has an elevator, a must because of a family member's limited mobility.

"The key to making everything work is cooperation," Chris says. They have created systems for everything from sleeping arrangements (they rotate bedrooms every year) to meals. Rules and boundaries have been established for noise levels, bathroom use and grocery shopping. "It's not always equal," Chris admits. But it doesn't matter. In order for this type of arrangement to work, you have to get over the minutiae.

Family dinners together are a great part of the Malach teamwork tradition. Each family prepares one evening meal for the entire group. "Eating meals at home every night is wonderful," Chris says. "All you have to do is show up." Ham, lasagna, pasta, breakfast for dinner…they've done it all. Some cooks get creative, and recipes are often shared. Nobody gets saddled with too much work.

Mike and Kathy McCurdy with their grandchildren (L to R) Chase, Abby, Carter, Andrew (standing), Kylie and Ella

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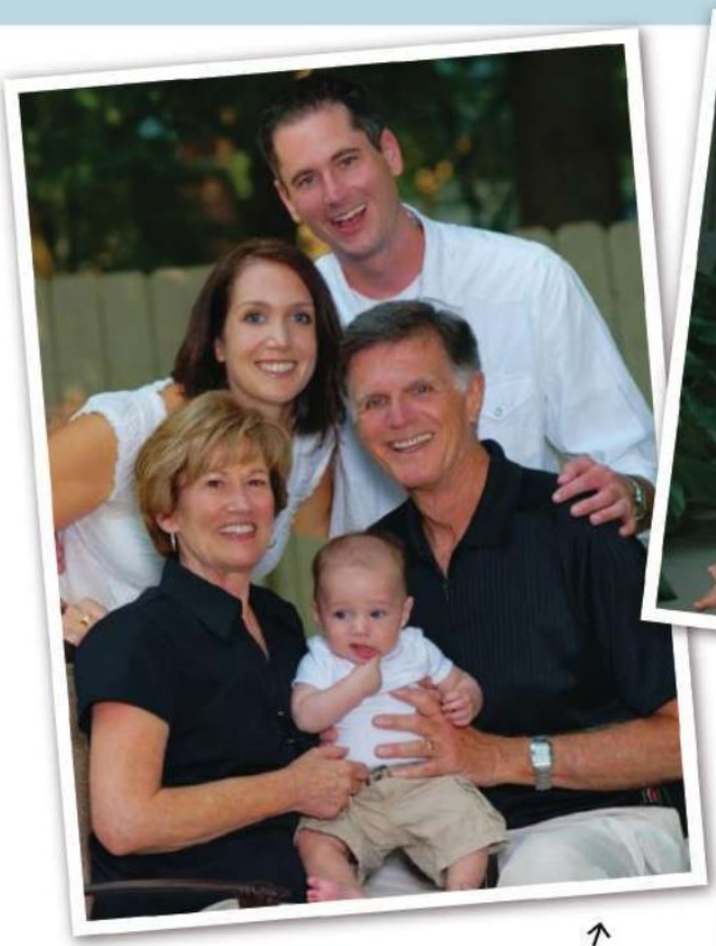

Three generations of Nitzschkes (top to bottom): David, Kyle, Dale, Linda and Wyatt

Ron and Ila Hutchinson with their great-grandchildren: (L to R) Carter, Wyatt, Chase, Andrew and Abby

Change it Up

Norbert and Mary Alice Menke of Madeira celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by taking their six children and their families (a total of 35 people) on a four-day Carnival Caribbean cruise. "The whole thing was fantastic," says their daughter, Sharon Menke Milligan of North Canton, Ohio. Though the clan has gathered for five vacation reunions, cruising was a new adventure for the Menkes. With no cooking, no clean-up and no driving hassles, everyone—from age 8 to 75—had a great time.

For these reasons, cruises are particularly popular with grandparents. Moreover, handicap-accessible cruises are readily available from a variety of cruise lines so everyone can enjoy the experience. Again, a travel agent can help you ensure that ports, tours and tender boats (which move people from the ship to the port) are accessible.

While a cruise is definitely a pricier reunion option for a crowd, there are deals to be had and creative ways to cut costs. Crowley of Wayfarer Travel notes that some tours leave from Charleston, S.C., a mere day's drive for Cincinnatians who want to avoid air travel. Shorter cruises range from approximately $350-$700 per person, Crowley estimates, though prices change often.

Those who are skittish about being trapped on a boat with relatives (and thousands of strangers) can relax: These ships are floating cities so it's easy to get away from the crowd. Or if you're like Chris Gunkel, a Menke in-law, you can simply send the rest of your family off to Cozumel for the day while the ship is at port and have the entire 35-seat block of tables to yourself at dinner. (The Carnival wait staff was amused to see dressed-up Chris all alone at the massive table, enjoying his quiet time.)

Create a Keepsake

Each family has a unique personality and a history that changes with each passing year. With modern, lightweight recorders and even cell phones you can easily capture highlights of your reunion. Family stories told by the elders provide invaluable keepsakes and can be distributed to each family after the celebration.

But don't forget the photos! Candid snapshots are super and really showcase the personality of your group, so take plenty. Adding a professional photo shoot will ensure that you get the best possible images.

"We could've had five cameras going and we wouldn't have captured what Keith and Angie did," Mike McCurdy says of Keiser Photography's Keith and Angie Keiser.

Though the McCurdys originally enlisted the couple to take a large group portrait and a photo of each family unit, they were so thrilled with the results that they worked with the Keisers to produce first a web gallery and finally a print book that includes both professional images and snapshots, some collected from past events as well. The McCurdys surprised their children with a gift copy at Christmas. "It's just going to be more valuable as time goes on," Keith Keiser notes.

But is this expensive? It depends on what you want and how organized you are, Keith says. Kathy and Mike knew what they wanted, so the photo shoot was an hour and a half rather than an energy-draining day, he explains. Another time-saving tip obvious to parents: Photo shoots work best after children have napped.

If your reunion is a multi-day event, schedule your professional portrait session at the beginning of your time together. This way, you can reschedule if the weather becomes blustery or someone gets

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sick. The Weinberg family (which includes the Hayutin branch from Cincinnati) met their professional photographer at the end of the scorching-hot train ride. As a result, the red-faced babies and wilting grandparents have become part of the permanent record.

The Menkes and the Malachs hire a photographer every few years but always take a lot of their own photos, including one shot of the entire family. When photographing a large group on your own, remember that more people in a row means more sky and more ground in your shot, explains Kim Rice of Keepsake Photography Studio in Mt. Lookout. She recommends "stacking" people to get the best image. Create rows by using picnic tables or benches, for example.

Whether you're taking your own photos or hiring a professional, dressing as a family unit works well for group shots. Rebecca VanDeventer of Hilton Head Island Photography recommends khaki and white for its timeless, classic look. Some families differentiate themselves with colored shirts, as the McCurdys did.

The 18 members of the Berendt family wore custom-made T-shirts with the island of St. Lucia pictured to commemorate the trip. "Do your T-shirt research," Katie Brooks from the Cincinnati branch of the family advises now. Family members couldn't figure out for the first few days of the trip why the locals in St. Lucia were laughing at them. In a thick Caribbean accent, the scuba guide finally told them: "You people got it all wrong!" The island was printed upside down.

Focus on What's Important

The point of a family reunion seems obvious—to connect with each other—but this goal is easily obscured with details and the occasional conflict. Plan early, come to an agreement, then just let it go and have fun. How you do this is as unique as each family.

No two Menke family reunions are alike. They have cycled in Colorado for the Courage Classic, visited the beach and cruised the Caribbean. An adventurous bunch, they like to try new things together. Other families, like the Malachs, grow closer with enduring traditions. Through the little girl tea parties at "Nanny's beach house" to the week-long Texas Hold 'em Tournaments, the cousins have become friends over Survivor contests, photo-scavenger hunts and pet hermit crab races. All the kids know that Pop Pop is always up for a card game.

Whatever you do and however you do it, remember that the goal is not to be entertained, but to be together. ■

The Cincinnati USA Sampler

The Queen City and its surrounding counties provide endless activities for family reunion weekends. Here are some recommendations from local convention and visitors bureaus.

Cincinnati/Hamilton County:
(www.CincinnatiUSA.com) The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden has universal appeal. Families can also catch a Reds game (group seating/prices available) or visit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Those who like to tour should check out Architreks "CincinnatiWalks" Tours and Newport Gangster Tours. You can also explore Cincinnati's Eden Park and/or downtown via Segway www.segwayofohio.com). The Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal offers five museum experiences inside the historic Art Deco former train station.

Butler County:
(www.destinationbutlercounty.com) EnterTRAINment Junction in West Chester appeals to all ages. Touted as the world's only train-themed entertainment center, visitors can enjoy a 25,000-sq.-ft. model train display, a railroad museum and a Thomas the Tank Engine-themed play area. The skies above Middletown burst with color during the MidFirst Ohio Challenge Hot Air Balloon Festival, July 16-18, 2010. And if you're looking for an outdoor venue for your reunion, try the Voice of America Park and its Ronald Reagan Lodge.

Clermont County:
(www.visitclermontohio.com) The Cincinnati Nature Center is a big hit with visitors of any age. History buffs can check out the birthplace of President Ulysses S. Grant or take a family driving tour of Underground Railroad and abolitionist sites along the Freedom Trail (guide available on the CVB website above). Harsha/East Fork Lake is very popular with rowers and home to two major championship regattas.

Warren County:
(www.ohioslargestplayground.com) There's more to do in a 30-mile radius of Warren County than anywhere else in Ohio. Great Wolf Lodge at Kings Island is a super home base for visiting families. The new Ozone Zipline Adventures (a tree-top canopy tour) at YMCA Camp Kern attracts outdoorsy thrill-seekers, while Morgan's Canoe Livery and the Little Miami Scenic Trail in Loveland offer additional touring options. Historic Waynesville is an antique-lover's dream. The Ohio Renaissance Festival and the Ohio Sauerkraut Festival are fall favorites. The Annual Lebanon Carriage Parade & Christmas Festival draws large crowds.

Northern Kentucky:
(www.nkycvb.com) Just across the Ohio River is the Newport Aquarium, named the No. 1 aquarium in the Midwest by a Zagat Survey. It's one of the many attractions at Newport on the Levee, a popular shopping and dining destination. Or, book a seat on Ride the Ducks Newport an amphibious vehicle that takes a 45-minute guided tour over land and water—a truly unique way to see the historic waterfronts of Newport, Covington and Cincinnati (www.newportducks.com). Of particular interest to military families is the new Spirit of America live-action show at NKU September 17-18 (free but tickets required through The Bank of Kentucky Center) highlighting U.S. history through the eyes of the American soldier.

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Taking Care

Legions of baby boomers are assuming a demanding new role—caring for their parents. Here's how to survive it.

By Coleen Armstrong

Too often, it begins with a crisis.

Your 85-year-old mother is in a rehabilitation center, recovering from an injury. The phone rings. Her therapy is completed. Since Mom can do the rest of her healing at home (either yours or hers) along with periodic monitoring, she'll be released within the hour, and you'll need to fetch her immediately.

In the blink of an eye, you've just been drop-kicked into the topsy-turvy world of elder-care—where every day seems to bring another challenge.

Baby boomers, whose numbers are estimated at 78.2 million in the U.S., have long been categorized by the media as self-interested and over-indulged, but current evidence indicates otherwise. Many are now helping their elderly parents—while simultaneously juggling full-time jobs, babysitting grandkids, and trying to replace staggering losses to their depleted retirement accounts. But with all that to juggle, preparing for sudden catastrophes often isn't on anyone's radar screen.

"Almost without exception, adult children reach out willingly," says Doug Spitler, CEO of Episcopal Retirement Homes. "But what we see is families thrust into this situation with no preplanning and no sense of what's involved. Out of the blue, Mom or Dad experiences a major life incident. You need to make important decisions, and guide your parent through some very difficult times."

All of which will run more smoothly if you begin early. The worst time to marshal your forces is immediately following an emergency, when no one is able to think clearly. Don't wait for a crisis. Even if your parents are in relatively good health, you're going to need a plan.

Step One: Consult a geriatric care or case manager (GCM).

Most hospitals and extended-care facilities provide contact information; many even have such professionals on staff. At Mercy Hospital Western Hills, for example, nurse case managers look at clinical needs, and social workers help with discharge planning, says Leslie Nahigyan, director of quality and case management. "We're very proactive," she notes, "about getting options in front of patients and their families."

"An elderly parent may have a heart condition or be a newly diagnosed diabetic," explains Mercy social worker Maureen Duwel, LSW. "We'll set up home care with a visiting nurse, and assess safety factors by finding out how many stairs there are, or if dogs might present a danger of tripping. And we'll have that talk early in the hospital stay, then the home-care staff goes out once the patient is released and sees how things are working." Sometimes, she says, Mom or Dad will be overly optimistic about getting back home—and then discover that rising from bed isn't so easy. The social worker can help the family to line up some assistance.

Kathy Ison, vice-president at Episcopal Retirement Homes and responsible for geriatric case management, acknowledges that for adult children the prospect of navigating eldercare can seem at first like wrestling an octopus. Issues may range from deciphering medical bills, to scheduling Meals On Wheels, to attaching grab bars in a shower. All feel equally overwhelming, but sometimes a GCM can suggest a very simple solution.

One elderly woman was having trouble carrying clean laundry from the basement to her bedroom. Did she need to pack up and move to assisted living, her family inquired? No, Ison said; just arrange for a stackable washer-and-dryer unit to be installed near the kitchen.

TIP: Separate the minor from the mind-boggling. Purchasing a walker or adding an elevated toilet seat is easy. On the other hand, boomers often have no idea what kind of Medicare insurance their parents carry, says Maureen Duwel, and sometimes parents don't remember either. "Years ago, there was one standard of Medicare coverage," she says. "Today there are a lot of Medicare HMOs. That minor detail is a big difference." Hunt down that handbook, and learn all about co-payments.

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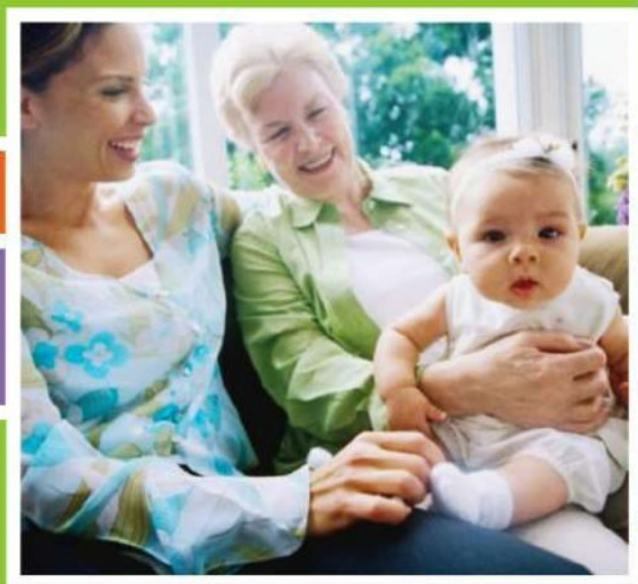

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Step Two:
Schedule a family meeting.

If a holiday season is the only time to gather everyone from the earth's four corners, so be it. Each adult child and each spouse, along with Mom and/or Dad, should be fully present to discuss strategic, financial and labor-sharing alternatives.

TIP: Be sure to invite the GCM or a mediator, who will keep everyone on the subject. "Also," Ison says, "you'd be amazed at how much more honest and vocal a parent may be with a care manager in the room. Maybe Mom doesn't want to go live with her oldest daughter—but she might otherwise remain silent, rather than hurt anyone's feelings."

"Almost without exception, adult children reach out willingly," says Spitler "But what we see is families thrust into this situation with no preplanning and no sense of what's involved. Out of the blue, Mom or Dad experiences a major life incident. You need to make important decisions, and guide your parent through some very difficult times."

—Doug Spitler, CEO of Episcopal Retirement Homes

Step Three:
Give everybody an assignment, not just those who live nearby.

No matter how organized big sister Marla may be, it isn't fair if she has three jobs and younger brother Sam has none. And many tasks, like calling a plumber, can be completed long-distance.

TIP: Siblings who have a history of not handling responsibility well will continually disappoint, even as adults. Some protective low-balling may be in order. Perhaps Sam is okay with just mowing the grass each Saturday—or even arranging to have it done.

Step Four:
Formulate back-up plans.

What if Dad completes his rehab within an unexpectedly short time? Who drives over to pick him up? Who restocks the fridge? Who stays with him during that first week back home? And what if sister Kelly starts back-pedaling on her monthly bill-paying duties? Who volunteers to take over? What alternate mission should Kelly then assume?

TIP: Put everything in writing and distribute copies. It will help prevent a routine chorus of: "I thought you were doing that!"

Step Five:
Keep all paperwork in order.

You already know the drill: power of attorney, durable health care power of attorney, a will, a trust, a living will. Call a firm that includes specialists in exactly what you need, advises Dennison Keller, whose elder law practice is in Kenwood. You may already have dealt with your own retirement and estate planning (primarily from a tax-saving standpoint); this time you'll need someone who understands the ins and outs of paying for long-term care, government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, and end-of-life decisions.

"If you need new documents, some provisions may overlap with the old ones," Keller says. "A good elder law attorney will discuss with your mom or dad specific planning techniques such as including a gifting power. Does she allow her POA agent to give monetary gifts to himself? At age 50, maybe not. At age 70, it's a different matter."

TIP: Don't forget to make periodic updates—about every three to five years. Circumstances and desires can change.

Step Six:
Consider at-home care, at least for a while.

In cases of emergency, an escalated need or even a well-deserved caregiver vacation, agencies can put a schedule of rotating eight-hour shifts into place within hours. *(See sidebar on page 92.)* Establish a phone or email relationship, and understand the procedure before you need it. Be realistic, advises Barry Bortz, CEO of Carespring in Dayton, Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky: "As long as Dad is alert and just needs help

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with bathing and taking meds, you're fine. Later on, home care becomes questionable."

TIP: Although basic at-home care doesn't include medical treatments such as IVs, it does buy time to evaluate your choices. With the addition of a visiting nurse, it could become a fairly long-term solution.

Step Seven:
Research extended-care facilities.

Although only about 5 percent of seniors ever need long-term facility care, Bortz says, it's essential to have a handful of possibilities in place. First, understand the placement categories: independent living, transitional care, assisted living, nursing care and Alzheimer's wards. Continuous-care communities are popular options now, because they allow residents to stay within the facility as their care needs increase.

"I love the idea of blended communities, where independent and assisted residents are housed together, so when the time comes, they don't need to move to a different wing," says Kathleen Hammon, corporate vice president of marketing at Fairfield Pavilion with extended-care facilities in both Fairfield and Middletown.

Next, consider location. No one wants to spend two hours on the freeway for a weekend visit. Then study socialization. "These are bustling places, complete with field trips," Spitler says. "We know the importance of keeping folks healthy and active." Sometimes, Hammon adds, an elderly person who starts interacting with peers "kind of springs back to life!" Appetites increase, agrees Kathy Yerkes, retirement counselor at Mt. Pleasant Retirement Village in Monroe. "Once they have food placed in front of them, you'd be surprised at how much they can eat. Adult children exclaim, 'My mom has gained weight!' Well, she's eating healthy now and making new friends."

Don't confuse your parent with too many choices, Yerkes says; narrow them down to three or four, with a spreadsheet of plusses for each. Discuss accreditation, state survey results, finances, a continuum of care, social calendars, and which perks may be more pivotal to him or her than to you, or vice-versa. When Gary Horning, vice president of marketing and communications at Otterbein Retirement Living Communities in Lebanon, went shopping for care for his father (about a decade before he came to work at Otterbein), he was surprised to discover that their preferences didn't quite coincide. *(See sidebar on page 89.)*

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Sounds like a plan

Shopping for an extended-care facility for his father sounded simple enough, thought Gary Horning. But this was 10 years before he became marketing vice president of Otterbein Retirement Living Communities in Lebanon. He knew that with so many locations and varied services, he'd need to approach the search through what he calls "segmentation and targeting. You start by listing the things that are most important to you."

First was quality of care. It didn't take long for Horning to discover that faith-based, not-for-profit groups seemed more focused on care than on amenities. Second was physical proximity. He drew a line on a map between his father's house and his own, and not wanting to yank his dad too far out of his own element, he drew a circle with only a 15-mile radius.

Now armed with a short list, he talked to people about reputations, images and general feelings. Soon the number of choices was narrowed to three, and he took his dad to visit each one. A final decision came quickly and easily.

"The most frustrating thing for some people," Horning says now, "is that they're literally all over the map. Oh, this is cool, that's cool. Yet in the end, they gravitate toward the same basic elements that I've mentioned. It just takes them longer to get there."

Only one speed bump along the way: "The social life and resident activities were far more important to me as a baby boomer than to my dad," Horning says. "We're so active and invested in our health that we want the swimming pools and the educational opportunities. My dad—he just wanted a place where he could read, watch TV and walk down the hall for dinner.

"So in the end, it was a gift for me just to know that a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. And to know that he'd be okay."

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Studying a parent's current environment also helps in understanding her wants and needs better, says Wendy Horn, chief marketing officer for The Stratford Companies with a facility in Kenwood: "People who want to live near their country club, their shopping centers, and their church or synagogue will feel more comfortable in a residential neighborhood setting. Someone who has been living in a high-rise facing the Ohio River will feel that having a great view is still important."

TIP: Don't get confused by terminology, Hammon says. "With every community trying to seem distinctive, you may hear different terms for the very same thing." Like what? A fitness center, a workout room and a wellness center. You won't sound foolish if you ask for clarification.

Can you hear me now?

Sooner or later, adult children will find themselves accompanying their parents to medical appointments. The first appointment may well be a hearing assessment.

"Frequently it's a family member who's most concerned," says Teresa Guiliano, managing audiologist with Queen City ENT Associates in Montgomery. "They'll say, 'I'm constantly yelling, and Mom still can't hear me,' or, 'I walk into the house, and the TV is so loud that it's shaking the walls.' So they'll bring in the parent out of sheer frustration."

Since hearing loss is such a gradual, progressive ailment, the parent may not even realize there's a problem. An audiologist will conduct testing, assess the degree of damage, explain possible causes (noise exposure, genetics, medication side effects, or just plain-vanilla aging), discuss insurance coverage and financial options, and then prescribe a remedy—generally a hearing aid.

Many seniors aren't aware of the technological advances that have taken place over the past decade, Guiliano says, so they underestimate the potential. "At age 80, you may not hear like a 20-year-old again," she admits, "but you will see a significant improvement."

Is it possible, then, that some adult children mistake a parent's undiagnosed hearing loss for senility?

"That's probably a bit of a stretch," Guiliano says. "But hearing issues can certainly disrupt communication, and that's always serious. So when you start to think, 'Dad's not listening; he's not paying attention,' then it's probably time for a check-up."

An added bonus: While on the premises, the boomer child may also elect to have an audiogram. After all, those earsplitting rock concerts and Jimi Hendrix records do eventually take their toll.

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Step Eight:

Safeguard your own mental and physical health.

The stats are shocking: More than one-fourth of American adults care for an aging parent, relative or spouse. Three-fourths of American adults with disabilities or chronic illnesses who stay at home depend solely on family and friends. (Source: AARP and the Family Caregiver Alliance.) With little help, no training and scant information, no wonder between 40 and 70 percent of caregivers eventually show some signs of depression.

Boomer caregivers must be continually aware of how much they can and cannot do, Spitler says. Pushing oneself beyond what's reasonable and practical isn't helpful; it's a disaster waiting to happen. "You can't avoid the need to rest and reenergize," he says. "If you exhaust yourself, then you're no good to anyone."

TIP: "Some parents will expect their caregiver child to be available to them all of the time," Spitler adds. "You need to be clear about that being impossible." Meanwhile, local Agencies on Aging (866-243-5678) can offer counseling and supportive services, and BenefitsCheckUp.org can identify financial help.

Step Nine:

Continue to allow your elderly parent some degree of ownership and control for as long as possible.

At one family meeting, one sibling suggested saving money by reducing their mother's cable TV lineup. She was only watching a small handful of programs anyway, so why not eliminate a couple of tiers? But Mom spoke up: "I like having all of those channels. I like skimming through them, even though each one may keep my attention for only a few minutes. I don't want a cheaper package." Luckily, no one argued. After hearing her clear word choices, "I like" and "I don't want," everyone nodded. "After all," her daughter shrugged later, "it's her money. As long as she's still able to tell us what she wants, we have an obligation to let her spend it as she sees fit."

TIP: "Until a parent reaches the point of being unable to make decisions, he or she should still be making some," Spitler says. "Your role as caregiver child is to be influential and assertive, yet sensitive. That's difficult, but necessary; otherwise, the parent will not get what he or she needs most—enduring respect for an entire life's worth of knowledge and experience." ■

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Not Home Alone

For seniors who prefer to age in place by remaining in their own homes indefinitely, some kind of assistance with bathing, grooming, laundry, housekeeping, and/or meal preparation will eventually be required.

"The family is where everything starts," explains Mike Schroth, director and owner of Visiting Angels Home Care on Cincinnati's west side (three additional Visiting Angels offices cover the Cincinnati USA area). "Many adult children initially want to handle such things on their own. But over time, it becomes far more complex than anything they can reasonably take on."

That's when they call an agency, where help ranges from weekly one-hour visits to 24-hour care. "We write up a specific plan based on individual needs," Schroth says. "What's critical for one senior won't be for another."

A trusting relationship, however, with written logs and regular phone calls to keep adult children informed, is essential in every case, he adds; it's also one of home care's greatest perks: "We become the family's eyes and ears for those times when they can't be there. Also, we provide regular companionship, so vital to any person living alone."

In one case an elderly woman was not sleeping well; she habitually got up in the middle of the night to wander around the house. Her children were frantic. What if she stumbled and fell? Enlisting an agency associate whose personal circumstances allowed her to stay

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overnight—with a baby monitor positioned near her bed—meant instant peace of mind for everyone.

People are surprised to learn that overnights are fairly common, says Mike Garfunkel, administrator and owner of Family Bridges Home Care in Reading. As parents age, their sleep habits can become reversed, with more rest taking place during the day than at night.

Rotating shifts are also common, with high degrees of customization. "We try to work out strategic times," says Cay Matayko Stout, founder and president of Parent Care Solutions in Madeira. "If a parent is an early riser, one caregiver may go in from 8 am till noon, get her up, showered and dressed, then fix breakfast and then make lunch, and put it in the fridge for later. Another person arrives at 5 pm, prepares dinner, does dishes and laundry and makes certain she's safely in bed. You're looking at 40 to 50 hours a week, a structure that works well for a lot of families."

A caregiver's goal is to help individuals stay safely within their homes and help with most requests, as long as it's non-medical and noninvasive. No catheters, for example; for those, a nurse is required. "We can make arrangements for you with a skilled care agency, where health insurance or Medicare may even pick up the tab," Garfunkel says.

Some agencies, such as Parent Care Solutions and Home Care By Black Stone, are one-stop shopping and employ their own nurses, therapists and care advisors.

"There are so many options for care that it is important for us to provide as many different types of in-home care as possible," says David Tramontana, CEO of Home Care by Black Stone. "That way as a clients' needs evolve over time, they can remain with one home care provider. We see that families really appreciate that, especially if loved ones live out of town." Black Stone staff members will also work with families to explore all payment options, including Medicare, Medicaid, personal health insurance and "private" pay—investigating eligibility and enrollments is not something a boomer child needs to handle alone.

In cases where escalated care becomes necessary, a live-in aide might make sense, especially if providing room and board saves money. Movement to an extended-care facility usually takes place when illness or infirmity is more than a caregiver or nurse can handle, or perhaps when the cost of 24-hour care exceeds that of a facility. Once again, Tramontana says, everything is decided on a case-by-case basis. "Every situation," he says, "is unique."

Still, basic home care can be the ideal solution for even an extended time; in fact, it may be all that's needed. A woman in her mid-60s first broke her ankle and then was diagnosed with cancer. After completing both rehabilitation and chemotherapy, she called Visiting Angels. Did she need several daily hours of assistance? No, she was still too young and active for that. All she wanted, she said, was for someone to show up once each week after she'd returned from the grocery store—to help haul the bags up 20 steps to her kitchen.

A small request with a huge payoff, and many added years of soul-satisfying independence. "For most people," says Cay Matayko Stout, "there is no greater end-of-life value than this." ■

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ALOIS ALZHEIMER CENTER

70 Damon Road / Cincinnati, OH 45218 / 513-605-1000 / www.alois.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Asst. Liv., Nurs. Care, Short Term Respite, Adult Day Prog.; Education & Research Center

102 TOTAL UNITS: 20 Asst. Liv. / 82 Nurs. Beds

AVERAGE AGE: Varies

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 90%

TOTAL STAFF: 100

First specialized Alzheimer's disease and dementia center in the United States; provides assisted living, nursing care, short-term respite and adult day services.

AVALON BY OTTERBEIN AT ATRIUM

105 Atrium Drive / Franklin, OH 45005 / 513-260-7690 / www.otterbein.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing, Rehabilitation

50 TOTAL UNITS: Five one-story homes with 10 elders each.

Private suites, a spacious great room with a hearth area, open airy space with large windows, beautiful patio, a residential kitchen, family dining area, a salon/spa and a den. Five one-story homes with 10 elders each. The people living in each house make their own decisions about daily living and schedules.

AVALON BY OTTERBEIN AT MAINEVILLE

201 Marge Schott Way / Maineville, OH 45039 / 513-267-8592 / www.otterbein.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing, Rehabilitation

50 TOTAL UNITS: Five one-story homes with 10 elders each.

Private suites, a spacious great room with a hearth area, open airy space with large windows, beautiful patio, a residential kitchen, family dining area, a salon/spa and a den. Five one-story homes with 10 elders each. The people living in each house make their own decisions about daily living and schedules. Opening late summer 2010.

AVALON BY OTTERBEIN AT SPRINGBORO

9320 Avalon Circle / Centerville, OH 45458 / 513-260-7690 / www.otterbein.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing, Rehabilitation

50 TOTAL UNITS: Five one-story homes with 10 elders each.

Private suites, a spacious great room with a hearth area, open airy space with large windows, beautiful patio, a residential kitchen, family dining area, a salon/spa and a den. Five one-story homes with 10 elders each. The people living in each house make their own decisions about daily living and schedules.

BARRINGTON OF FORT THOMAS INDEPENDENT AND ASSISTED LIVING

940 Highland Ave. / Fort Thomas, KY 41075 / 859-572-0667 / www.carespring.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. and Asst. Liv. Apts.

108 TOTAL UNITS: 108 Ind.+ Asst. Liv. Apts.

PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies

TOTAL STAFF: 50

One- and two-bedroom apartments available with fully equipped kitchens, washers and dryers. Residents enjoy many amenities including fitness center, cocktail bar and chef-prepared meals in the dining room.

BARRINGTON OF OAKLEY INDEPENDENT AND ASSISTED LIVING

4855 Babson Place / Cincinnati, OH 45227 / 513-600-4667 / www.carespring.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. and Asst. Liv. Apts.

105 TOTAL UNITS: 105 Ind. + Asst. Liv. Apts.

Eight floor plans available in this new community. All apartments have fully equipped kitchens, washers, dryers and more. Many amenities including fitness center, cocktail bar, movie theatre and spa.

BARRINGTON OF WEST CHESTER INDEPENDENT AND ASSISTED LIVING

7222 Heritagespring Drive / West Chester, OH 45069 / 513-777-4457 / www.carespring.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. and Asst. Liv. Apts.

105 TOTAL UNITS: 105 Ind. + Asst. Liv. Apts.

Eight floor plans available in this new community. All apartments have fully equipped kitchens, washers, dryers and more. Many amenities including fitness center, cocktail bar, movie theatre and spa.

BERKELEY SQUARE, A COLONIAL COMMUNITY

100 Berkeley Drive / Hamilton, OH 45013 / 513-856-8600 / www.colonialseniors.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community

237 TOTAL UNITS: 148 Ind. Liv. / 25 Asst. Liv. / 64 Nurs. Beds

AVERAGE AGE: 78

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 92%

TOTAL STAFF: 163

Recently received a CMS Five-Star Rating and ranked in the top 1 percent of Ohio by an ODA 2007 Resident Satisfaction Survey. The 65-acre campus features five stocked lakes, indoor swimming pool and wellness facility, an intergenerational licensed kindergarten, restaurants and shops.

BRIDGEWAY POINTE ASSISTED LIVING

165 W. Galbraith Road / Cincinnati, OH 45216 / 513-418-4370 / bridgewaypointe.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Asst. Liv., Respite & Memory Care

102 TOTAL UNITS

AVERAGE AGE: Varies; includes adults of all ages

PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies

TOTAL STAFF: 78

Attached to Drake Center. Provides on-site collaboration with residents, families, experts and state-of-the-art therapies. Secured memory-care area, The Harbor, was recently awarded "Excellence in Care Dementia Program of Distinction" by the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

BROOKWOOD RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

12100 Reed Hartman Hwy. / Cincinnati, OH 45241 / 513-605-2000 / www.hcmg.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community

227 TOTAL UNITS: 40 Ind. Liv. / 54 Asst. Liv. / 133 Nurs. Beds

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%

TOTAL STAFF: 200

A full-service continuing care facility. Nursing, assisted living and independent living services available. Features indoor/outdoor pool, tennis court, walking path and elegant dining room.

CEDAR VILLAGE

5467 Cedar Village Drive / Mason, OH 45040 / 513-754-3100 / www.cedarvillage.org

TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. & Asst. Liv., Rehabilitation after hospitalization, Driving Assessment Program, Cedar Village Home Care, Cedar Village Louis and Dorothea Ginberg Comfort Care Program

267 TOTAL UNITS: 105 Ind. Liv. and Asst. Liv. / 162 Nurs. Beds-Health Care Facility

AVERAGE AGE: 87

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 100% Ind. Liv. And Asst. Liv. Units; 95% Nurs. Beds-Health Care Facility

TOTAL STAFF: 323

Full-time pastoral care, including both Reform and Orthodox rabbis. Will connect residents with their own community clergy and worship services. Full range of daily activities such as fitness, lectures and discussion, adult education, music and theater discussion groups and speakers events. Many amenities on campus.

CLOVERNOOK HEALTHCARE PAVILION

7025 Clovernook Ave. / Cincinnati, OH 45231 / 513-605-4000 / www.hcmg.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Nursing

127 TOTAL UNITS: 127 Nurs. Beds

AVERAGE AGE: All ages

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 90%+

TOTAL STAFF: 180

An outstanding facility with a warm environment and a caring staff. Includes a highly-trained team specializing in wound care and a superior therapy department.

COTTINGHAM RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

3995 Cottingham Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45241 / 513-563-3600 / www.cottinghamretirementcommunity.com

TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum Care Retirement Community

273 TOTAL UNITS: 121 Ind. Liv. / 92 Asst. Liv. / 60 Nurs. Beds

AVERAGE AGE: 85

PERCENT OCCUPIED: 98%

TOTAL STAFF: 150

Locally owned by Deaconess Long-Term Care Inc., a not-for-profit organization. Offers an indoor swimming pool, beauty salon, branch bank, library and also PT, OT and speech therapies.

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Enjoy the Good Life at Berkeley Square

Imagine an evening stroll down a quiet, tree-lined street to your beautiful custom home nestled within a private neighborhood. Imagine retirement at Berkeley Square!

Berkeley Square, located in Hamilton, Ohio, understands that today's retiring adults want more options, more space, and more amenities—all in one place. Take your choice from a variety of spacious homes, apartments, or custom-designed plans to meet your particular needs. You'll enjoy the independence and privacy, yet appreciate the maintenance-free living and peace of mind Berkeley Square offers.

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Residents also enjoy complimentary memberships to our private restaurant and wellness center, a value of $500/year. Plus, they take advantage of a variety of activities and amenities, including:

- Gourmet dinners and happy hours at the Coach House Tavern & Grille
- Yoga classes, water aerobics, and more fitness options at the Bever Wellness Center
- Activities with children through our intergenerational Colonial Schools
- Trips to Keeneland, Riverbend, Hollywood Casino, Playhouse in the Park, and more

Yet, you may be surprised to learn Berkeley Square is one of the most affordable communities in the greater Cincinnati area. With homes starting at just $85,000, and monthly fees starting at $940—you'll find security for the future at an incredible value.

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THE COURTYARD AT SEASONS
7100 Dearwester Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45236 / 513-984-9400 / www.seniorlifestyle.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum of Care
128 TOTAL UNITS: 83 Asst. Liv./45 Nurs. Beds
Continuum of care retirement community on campus with Seasons in Kenwood. Choose from a wide array of lifestyle options. Designed for those who want companionship and amenities with a hospitality-centered staff and a stimulating environment.

DEUPREE HOUSE
3939 Erie Ave. / Cincinnati, OH 45208 / Contact Gini Tarr, 513-561-4200 / www.DeupreeHouse.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuous Care
162 TOTAL UNITS
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 90%
TOTAL STAFF: 60
Winner of the prestigious SAGE "Best in Show" award for the finest retirement community campus in the country. A premier retirement community bordering Hyde Park offering first-class amenities and services provided by an incredible staff. Features Deupree Cottages, a new alternative to traditional nursing care.

EASTGATESPRING OF CINCINNATI HEALTH CARE CENTER & REHABILITATION
4400 Glen Este-Withamsville Road / Cincinnati, OH 45245 / 513-752-3710 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation
189 TOTAL UNITS: 189 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 78
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 235
A beautifully appointed facility specializing in rehabilitative and skilled nursing care. Modern amenities include Starbucks Coffee shop, cable television and wireless Internet access.

EVERGREEN/WELLSPRING RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
230 W. Galbraith Road / Cincinnati, OH 45215 / 513-948-2308 / www.seniorlifestyle.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Retirement Community—Ind. Liv., Asst. Liv., Nurs. Care, Memory Care, Rehab
395 TOTAL UNITS: 150 Apts. / 42 Cottages / 133 Asst. Liv. / 70 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 85
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 94%
TOTAL STAFF: 340
Continuing care community that features golf, walking trails, fine dining and entertainment. Cottages and apts. offer features such as fireplaces and patios; rehab, nursing and memory care also available.

FAIRFIELD PAVILION
5251 Dixie Highway / Fairfield, OH 45014 / 513-699-4600 / www.fairfieldpavilion.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community, Ind. and Asst. Liv., Nurs. Care, Memory Impairment Unit
116 TOTAL UNITS: 116 Ind. Liv and Asst. Liv. Apts.
AVERAGE AGE: 79
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%
TOTAL STAFF: 345 (includes Tri-County Extended Care)
A blended community of independent- and assisted-living residents. Structured to personalize services to meet the needs of residents at all levels of care.

FLORENCE PARK CARE CENTER
6975 Burlington Pike / Florence, KY 41042 / 859-525-0007 / www.florenceparkcarecenter.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled and Intermediate Nursing
150 TOTAL UNITS: 150 Nurs. Beds
TOTAL STAFF: 200
Provides 24-hour nursing care including intermediate, skilled care, short-term rehabilitation and respite stays. Physical, occupational and speech therapies are available.

GARDEN MANOR
6898 Hamilton Middletown Road / Hamilton, OH 45044 / 513-424-5321 / www.gardenmanorretirement.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Blended Continuing Care Community: Skilled Nurs., Ind. Liv., Asst. Liv., Respite Care
346 TOTAL UNITS: 105 Ind. And Asst. Liv. Apts / 241 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 79
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%
TOTAL STAFF: 335
All levels of care are provided on a 25-acre campus. Personalized service meets the needs of residents at all levels of care.

GLENDALE PLACE CARE CENTER
779 Glendale-Milford Road / Cincinnati, OH 45215 / 513-771-1779 / www.yourcaringplace.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing Facility
122 TOTAL UNITS: 34 Private + 44 Semi-Private Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 82
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 92%
TOTAL STAFF: 130
Offers exceptional physical, occupational and speech therapy, along with skilled nursing services, long-term care, Alzheimer's/dementia care, hospice and respite services.

HERITAGE AT MIAMI BLUFFS
1275 Clubhouse Court / Maineville, OH 45039 / 513-677-5001 / www.heritageatmiamibluffs.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. Liv.—Active Adult Community
371 TOTAL UNITS: 371 Ind. Liv. Homes
Just for adults ages 55 or better. Offers an active community lifestyle coupled with a variety of low-maintenance homes. Located along the scenic Little Miami River in Maineville.

HIGHLANDSPRING OF FT. THOMAS HEALTH CARE CENTER & REHABILITATION
960 Highland Ave. / Fort Thomas, KY 41075 / 859-572-0660 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled & Intermediate Nursing, Rehabilitation
140 TOTAL UNITS: 140 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 80
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 220
A beautifully appointed facility specializing in rehabilitative and skilled nursing care. Modern amenities include Starbucks Coffee shop, cable television and wireless Internet access.

HILLSPRING HEALTH CARE CENTER, REHABILITATION & ASSISTED LIVING
325 E. Central Ave. / Springboro, OH 45066 / 937-748-1100 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled & Intermediate Nursing, Rehabilitation, Asst. Liv.
125 TOTAL UNITS: 6 Asst. Liv. / 119 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 80
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 162
A beautifully appointed facility specializing in rehabilitative and skilled nursing care. Modern amenities include ice cream parlor, cable television and wireless Internet access.

HYDE PARK HEALTH CENTER
4001 Rosslyn Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45209 / 513-272-0600 / www.hydeparkhealthcenter.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Senior Care Retirement Community
226 TOTAL UNITS: 42 Asst. Liv. / 170 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 80s
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 97%
TOTAL STAFF: 300
Pets allowed; chapel and chaplaincy program; elegant dining; skilled rehabilitation; skilled nursing; assisted-living apartments; specialized dementia/Alzheimer's assisted-living apartments and nursing-care private rooms; assisted-living guest respite suite.

INDIANSPRING OF OAKLEY TRANSITIONAL CARE CENTER
4900 Babson Place / Cincinnati, OH 45227 / 888-248-7799 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation
144 TOTAL UNITS: 75 Private Rooms
New, one-of-a-kind transitional care center. Amenities include Starbucks, Integrative Medicine Suite, patios with fireplaces. Retail space on lower level houses outstanding medical practitioners.

THE KNOLLS OF OXFORD
6727 Contreras Road / Oxford, OH 45056 / 513-524-7990 / www.knollsofoxford.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
184 TOTAL UNITS: 94 Cottages / 28 Asst. Liv. / 62 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 78
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 96%
TOTAL STAFF: 150
Nonprofit community on an 85-acre campus located near Miami University. Vibrant activity schedule and affiliation with college offers unique opportunities in retirement.

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LLANFAIR RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

1701 Llanfair Ave. / Cincinnati, OH 45224 / 513-681-4230 / www.oprs.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community, Ind. and Asst. Liv., Skilled Nurs., Rehabilitation, Dementia Care
240 TOTAL UNITS: 108 Ind. Liv. / 56 Asst. Liv. / 76 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 85
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 90%
TOTAL STAFF: 210
Built on 14 acres in historic College Hill, Llanfair, a Masterpiece Living Community, is known for relaxed living in the heart of the city. Minutes away from shopping, banking, medical services, churches and entertainment.

THE LODGE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

9370 Union Cemetery Road / Loveland, OH 45140 / 513-677-4900 / www.lodgecarecenter.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: SNF, Hospice Care, Rehabilitation, Intermediate Care, Secured Dementia Unit, Asst. Living & Ind. Living, Respite
334 TOTAL UNITS: 152 Ind. Liv. / 60 Asst. Liv. / 120 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 72
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 98%
TOTAL STAFF: 326
State-of-the-art rehabilitation and skilled nursing facility. Secured Dementia unit. Excellent staff-to-resident ratio. Studio apartments, cottages, one- and two-bedroom apartments.

LOVELAND HEALTH CARE

501 N. Second / Loveland, OH 45140 / 513-605-6000 / www.hcmg.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Nursing
99 TOTAL UNITS: 99 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 80
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 94%
TOTAL STAFF: 150
Recently renovated nursing-care facility specializing in rehabilitation and behavioral care. Well-trained staff will structure care to meet your individual needs.

MAPLE KNOLL VILLAGE

11100 Springfield Pike / Cincinnati, OH 45246 / 513-782-2717 / www.mapleknoll.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
525 TOTAL UNITS: 149 Villas / 130 Apts./ 60 Asst. Liv. / 186 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 85
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 90%
TOTAL STAFF: 300
Nonprofit community located on an updated, 54-acre campus filled with lots of green spaces. Vibrant activity schedule; located near major thoroughfares/attractions.

MARJORIE P. LEE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

3550 Shaw Ave. / Cincinnati, OH 45208 / Contact: Kim Silver, 513-533-5000 / www.marjorieplee.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuous Care
180 TOTAL UNITS
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 97%
TOTAL STAFF: 190
Walking distance to Hyde Park Square. It's about living on your terms at all levels of care. Features a new dining room, event center, physical therapy suite and pool.

MERCY COMMUNITY AT WINTON WOODS

10290 Mill Road / Cincinnati, OH 45231 / 513-825-9300 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Residential-living apartments for income-qualifying seniors.
73 TOTAL UNITS: 73 Res. Liv.
AVERAGE AGE: 75
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%+
TOTAL STAFF: 2
On beautiful grounds, in a former seminary. Residents enjoy a peaceful community surrounded by stained-glass windows, tree-filled views and friends. Seniors qualify with restricted income.

MERCY FRANCISCAN AT SCHRODER

1302 Millville Ave. / Hamilton, OH 45013 / 513-867-4100 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum of Care—Ind. Cottages, Residential Care, NSG, Skilled, Rehabilitation
135 TOTAL UNITS: 50 Residential / 85 Nurs. Beds plus 26 Cottages
AVERAGE AGE: 87
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 150
A strong member of the Hamilton and Fairfield community. Offers cottages, apts. and excellence in rehabilitation services. The great room is the perfect setting for innovative daily activities.

MERCY FRANCISCAN AT WEST PARK

2950 West Park Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45238 / 513-451-8900 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum of Care—Residential Care, NSG, Skilled, Rehabilitation
326 TOTAL UNITS: 226 Residential Care / 100 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 87
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 280
Known for its strong community reputation. Many residents and staff have called West Park home for 10-20 years.

MERCY FRANCISCAN TERRACE

100 Compton Road / Cincinnati, OH 45215 / 513-761-9036 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum of Care—Residential Care, NSG, Skilled, Rehabilitation
164 TOTAL UNITS: 40 Residential Care / 124 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 82
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 172
A beautiful, historic community located on the grounds of the St. Clare convent.

MERCY ST. THERESA

7010 Rowan Hill Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45227 / 513-271-7010 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuum of Care—Residential Care, NSG, Skilled, Rehabilitation
174 TOTAL UNITS: 72 Residential Care / 100 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 84
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 185
Off Miami Road in Mariemont with an amazing view of the city. Offers apartments and rehabilitation services in a peaceful environment.

MOUNT PLEASANT RETIREMENT VILLAGE

225 Britton Lane / Monroe, OH 45050 / 513-539-7391 / www.mtpleasant.oprs.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community; Ind., Asst. Liv., Rehabilitation Services
418 TOTAL UNITS: 246 Ind. Liv. / 53 Asst. Liv. / 119 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 76
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 98%
TOTAL STAFF: Over 350
Located in a beautiful setting close to shopping and medical services. The campus offers over 156 unique homes and numerous living options. Activities are abundant and the wave factor is high.

OTTERBEIN LEBANON RETIREMENT LIVING COMMUNITY

585 N. State Route 741 / Lebanon, OH 45036 / 513-933-5471 or 877-933-5471 / www.otterbein.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
707 TOTAL UNITS: 401 Ind. Liv. / 50 Asst. Living / 256 Nurs. Beds
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 86%
TOTAL STAFF: 555
One- to three-bedroom homes with amenities such as activity programs, chapel, clinic, bank, library, emergency call system and transportation. Independent and assisted living, short-term rehab stays, memory care and skilled nursing. Future site of the Warren County Arts and Culture Center.

PINEBROOK RETIREMENT LIVING

5877 Wolfpen-Pleasant Hill Road / Milford, OH 45150 / 513-831-5222 / www.pinebrookliving.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Independent Living with services
125 TOTAL UNITS: Independent Living suites/studio, one- and two-bedroom.
AVERAGE AGE: 78
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 60%
TOTAL STAFF: 52
Independent-living retirement community offers studio, one- and two-bedroom suites with numerous amenities and services.

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Western Hills • 451-8900

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Springfield Township • 825-9300

e-mercy.com/seniorliving

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RITTENHOUSE SENIOR LIVING OF MIDDLETOWN

3000 McGee Ave. / Middletown, OH 45044
513-423-2322 / www.rittenhousesl.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Asst. Liv. and Memory Care
61 TOTAL UNITS: 40 Asst. Liv. Apts./21 Memory Care Apts.
AVERAGE AGE: 80
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 75%
TOTAL STAFF: 47
Our individual care plans, life-enrichment programs, all-inclusive rates and no community fee make Rittenhouse a top choice. Residents come first in everything.

SEASONS RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

7300 Dearwester Drive / Cincinnati, OH 45236 / 513-984-9400 / www.seniorlifestyle.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Independent Living—Continuum of Care on campus at Courtyard
216 TOTAL UNITS: 216 Apartments
One- and two-bedroom rental apartments with full kitchens.

SHAWNEESPRING OF HARRISON HEALTH CARE CENTER & REHABILITATION

10111 Simonson Road / Harrison, OH 45030 / 513-367-7780 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled & Intermediate Nursing, Rehabilitation
140 TOTAL UNITS: 140 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 75
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 220
Specialized units for all residents' needs including a state-of-the-art therapy gym and rehab unit. Includes a Montessori school, Starbucks, recreation therapy room, chapel and family guest room.

ST. MARGARET HALL

1960 Madison Road / Cincinnati, OH 45206
513-751-5880 / www.stmargarethall.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Residential, Assisted Living and Nursing beds (skilled and intermediate)
134 TOTAL UNITS: 35 Res. and Asst. Liv. / 99 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 85
TOTAL STAFF: 185
Offers private rooms, daily Mass and respite stays in addition to a comprehensive therapy department for short-term and long-term residents.

STONEBRIDGE AT WINTON WOODS

10290 Mill Road / Cincinnati, OH 45231 / 513-825-0460 / www.e-mercy.com/seniorliving
TYPE OF FACILITY: Maintenance-free living
76 TOTAL UNITS
AVERAGE AGE: 72
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
TOTAL STAFF: 5
Scenic retirement community surrounded by 2,500 wooded acres. More than 76 cottages are built to date; select from two- and three-bedroom cottage styles. Close proximity to shopping, golf courses, and on-site Mass held in the historic chapel at Mercy Community.

THE STRATFORD AT KENWOOD

5435 Kenwood Road / Cincinnati, OH 45227 / 513-561-9300 / 888-310-3224 / www.stratfordatkenwood.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Premier Continuing Care Senior Living Facility
290 TOTAL UNITS: 239 Ind. Liv. / 25 Asst. Liv. / 12 Memory Support / 14 Skilled Nurs.
AVERAGE AGE: 77
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Opening July 2010
TOTAL STAFF: 120+ when fully occupied
Scheduled to open July 2010. First active, full-service, senior-living community of its kind in Kenwood. The concept of maintenance-free, active, independent, senior living is expanded to include convenient access to family, friends and neighborhoods you love.

TRI-COUNTY EXTENDED CARE

5200 Camelot Drive / Fairfield, OH 45014 / 513-829-8100
TYPE OF FACILITY: Extended Care
258 TOTAL UNITS: 258 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 79

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PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%
TOTAL STAFF: 345 (includes Fairfield Pavilion)
Tri-County Extended Care operates with Fairfield Pavilion to allow for a continuum of care.

TWIN LAKES AT MONTGOMERY

9840 Montgomery Road / Montgomery, OH 45242 / 513-719-3500 / www.lec.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
283 TOTAL UNITS: 115 Villas / 2 Manor Hm. / 95 Apts. / 28 Asst. Liv. / 43 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 75-85
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 92%
TOTAL STAFF: 155
A Life Enriching Community offering villa and apartment accommodations with a commitment to whole-person well-being, all conveniently located in the heart of Montgomery.

TWIN TOWERS SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY

5343 Hamilton Ave. / Cincinnati, OH 45224 / 513-853-2001 / www.lec.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
482 TOTAL UNITS: 140 Apts. / 138 Patio Hm. / 68 Asst. Liv. / 30 Mem. Sup. / 106 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 78-85
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 83%
TOTAL STAFF: 350+
A Life Enriching Community committed to whole-person well-being. Patio homes and apartments for independent lifestyles, as well as assisted living and nursing services.

VILLASPRING OF ERLANGER HEALTH CARE CENTER & REHABILITATION

630 Viox Drive / Erlanger, KY 41018 / 859-727-6700 / www.carespring.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Skilled & Intermediate Nursing, Rehabilitation
140 TOTAL UNITS: 140 Nurs. Beds
PERCENT OCCUPIED: Varies
Upscale nursing facility, outstanding rehabilitation/therapy services with separate rehab unit (flat-screen TVs, phones, spa menu). Services include long-term care, hospice care, dementia care and respite stays.

THE WATERFORD AT FAIRFIELD

1460 Corydale Drive / Fairfield, OH 45014 / 513-829-6200 / www.waterfordatfairfield.com
TYPE OF FACILITY: Ind. Liv.
120 TOTAL UNITS: 120 Studio, one- and two-bdrm. apts.
AVERAGE AGE: 75
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 95%
TOTAL STAFF: 30
Provides two meals a day, social activities, transportation, weekly housekeeping. Apartments offer 24-hour staffing and are rented on a monthly basis. No initial investment except security deposit. All utilities paid except phone.

WESTOVER, A COLONIAL COMMUNITY

855 Stahlheber Road / Hamilton, OH 45013 / 513-844-8004 / www.colonialseniors.org
TYPE OF FACILITY: Continuing Care Retirement Community
160 TOTAL UNITS: 38 Ind. Liv. / 42 Asst. Liv. / 80 Nurs. Beds
AVERAGE AGE: 81
PERCENT OCCUPIED: 94%
TOTAL STAFF: 127
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R.M., Barrington resident

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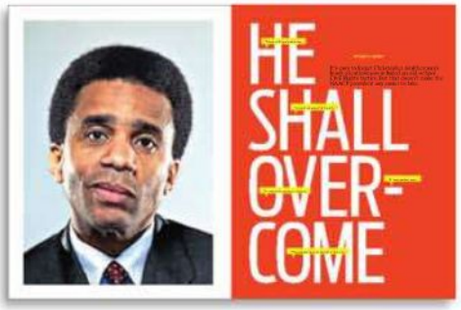

nothing if not theatrical.

This past spring, I sat down with a DVD of *Financially Speaking,* the show Smitherman has guest hosted on public access television for the last six months. In an undated episode entitled "Economic Apartheid, Pt. 2," Smitherman lets rip a detailed breakdown of Cincinnati Public Schools' construction expenditures and its crippling effects on the black community, gratuitously throwing in a high-pitched impersonation of school board president Eileen Cooper Reed, herself an NAACP member. He sits alone before a dry-erase board on which he compulsively scribbles numbers. He details the nature of CPS's misreported monies, then explains how the lack of contracts and jobs for black firms and workers trickles down to the school system's black families. Of CPS's 34,000 enrolled students, Smitherman says, 70 percent are black, 60 percent live below the poverty line, and 4,000 are homeless. CPS missed opportunities during its five-year plan to spend $700 million building schools "right in the heart of black neighborhoods."

Smitherman's presentation is a dash of rant, a sprinkle of farce, and a fistful of economics as he drives home his point. "They had an opportunity to lift these babies out of poverty by taking care of the parents, by taking care of the family. They think that…we should be happy getting two percent when the white community is getting 98 percent. And then the white community is left with this perception [that] African-American contractors don't exist," he says, waggling his left hand like he's waving off a foul odor, "that we don't have the capacity. And that's a lie. Let me show you how the hustle works."

He turns to the board and begins dissecting his version of a trifecta of corruption: low bids, shop bids, and change orders. It's a lot to take in, but basically Smitherman's Theory of CPS's Bidding Chicanery unfolds like so:

First, he asserts that CPS never posted bids on its website, so the public never knew who bid or even who won bids. Next, CPS "shopped bids" by contacting presumably white contractors to tell them the bids of other, presumably black or minority contractors, allegedly advising white contractors how to bid to win contracts. "This is not just about the African-American community getting work," he rails. "This is high-level corruption…outrageous and illegal."

Lastly, Smitherman alleges that white contractors submit low-ball bids, then raise prices after winning a contract—otherwise known as a "change order" which, he claims, the CPS board typically approves. "They never asked one question on change orders. As the change orders are being submitted, it is ballooning"—he pauses for effect, slowly forming an invisible sphere with his right hand—"our overall cost of the project." Then, blinking wildly, he stares into the camera. "The buck stops with the seven members of the CPS school board."

EILEEN COOPER REED is a five-year veteran of the CPS board, serving her second consecutive term as president. She is remarkably poised even in the eye of this ongoing maelstrom. Currently, five of the board's seven members are black, a fact Smitherman has used to hold them to a higher standard of accountability during the black contractor fracas.

"I have a responsibility to serve the *entire* community," Reed says over a late-April lunch conversation. When the original master plan was adopted in 2002, it included significant minority inclusion goals—20 to 25 percent in workforce development and 20 percent in contracting for women and minorities.

Reed answers direct questions without hesitation and does not appear fatigued by how many times she's had to explain the district's "clerical error." She says that in May 2009, Pamela Mullins, the head of District Supplier Diversity, made a presentation to the board. "Minority inclusion had dropped and we were appalled," Reed says. "We told the administration to get all the stakeholders in the construction industry together and to report back to us so we can get this cleared up. The real issue for me is, how do you improve the numbers you have, inflated or not?"

After I tell her of Smitherman's televised dissection of the low bid/shop bid/change order process, I ask if CPS's present system is flawed.

"There's no question the system was flawed for minority inclusion," she says, but she insists that CPS's Supplier Diversity department is trying to right itself. "We all understand there's *not* a level playing field. The construction industry is a particularly difficult industry, so that compounds the ability to figure out how to make this work. And frankly, I don't care who gets the credit. I just want it to get done."

I cannot leave Reed without getting her response to the emotional haranguing and blatant blaming—the melodrama—that's been ongoing at board meetings.

"I agree with them on the need to have minority—*African-American*—inclusion," Reed said. "After one meeting one sista came up to me and said, 'This ain't personal, sista, it's business.' And that really helped me. I said, 'OK, now we can get back to business and making sure we're doing what we need to do.'"

DURING HIS "Economic Apartheid" broadcast, Smitherman outlined the NAACP's three demands of CPS. First, the observation of MLK Day through 2015 by construction companies working in the district; second, CPS should come up with a strategic plan to increase its black contractors; and finally, they want to see specific plans for the multi-million dollar building budget. When the school board met on May 10, Smitherman was there, hammering home the message.

"I'm here to reiterate our concerns that African-Americans aren't working on con- • CONTINUED ON PAGE 133

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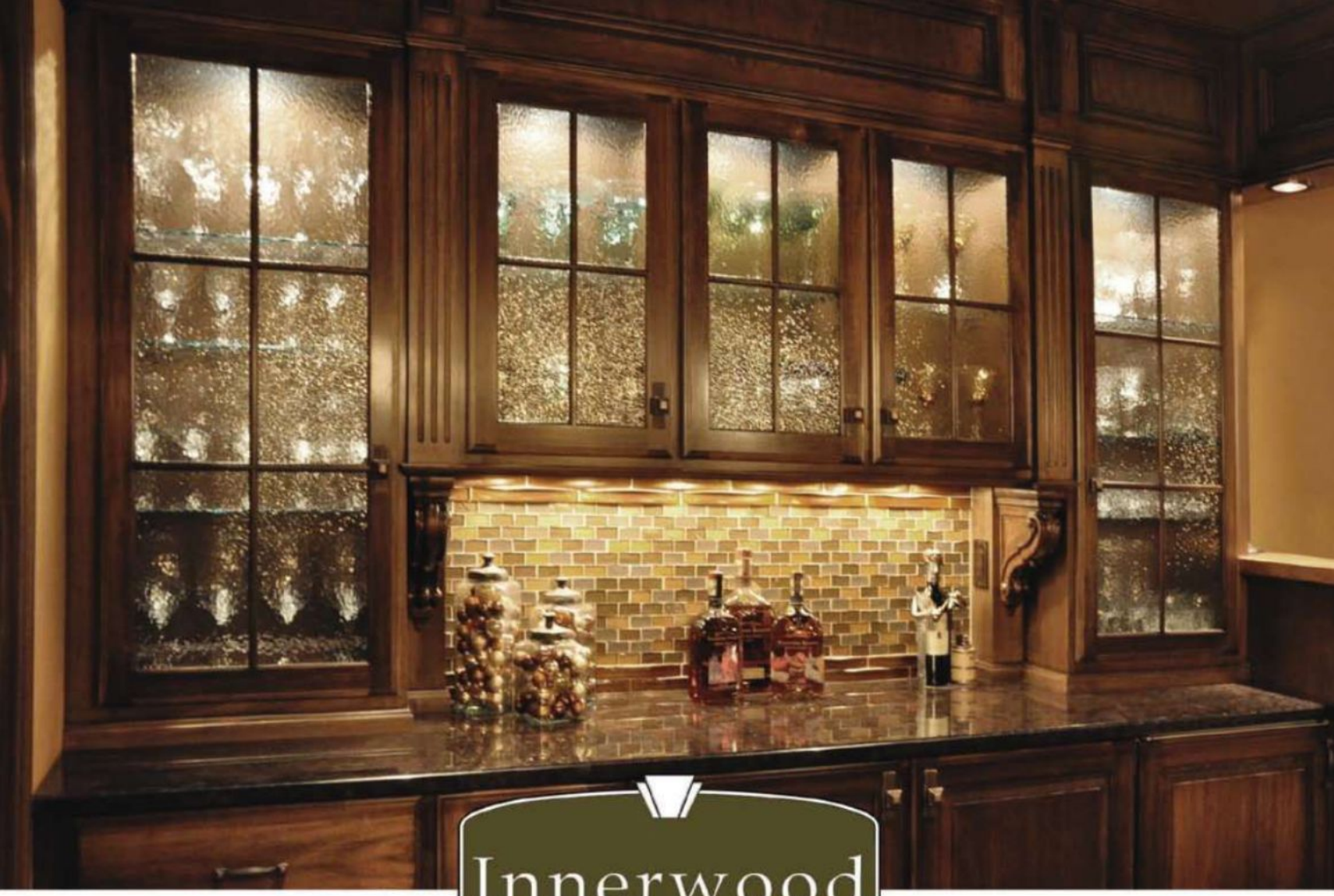

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What Every HOMEOWNER Should Know

From clay soil, to the annual freeze-thaw cycle, to 1930s wiring, Cincinnati-area homeowners regularly contend with a unique set of issues. Read on for the latest advice on home and garden topics geared just for our community. Then, search our online directory to find local professionals who can help you build, renovate, repair and decorate your dream home.

By Jessica Brown, Sue Goldberg, Marnie Hayutin and Kaydee Wilson

Architects, Builders & Developers

THE NEW-CONSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

Building a new home is filled with decisions, but that also means a wealth of opportunities. From cool products to hot neighborhoods, here are a few tips to keep top-of-mind if you're building.

PRODUCT PICKS

As you might have imagined, many of the hottest new building products and trends are focused on being eco-friendly without giving up the comfort and style you want in a new home.

"In addition to being beautiful and functional, homes should have a bit of 'geek chic,'" says Barbara Drees Jones, vice president of marketing at Drees Homes. That might include:

An ENERGY STAR rating

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ENERGY STAR-qualified homes are typically 20-30 percent more efficient than standard homes, with features such as high-performance windows and more efficient appliances. Your builder can point you to products and building methods that will help your new home earn this distinction.

Geothermal heating and cooling

The new rage in climate control, geothermal systems run fluid through underground pipes to take advantage of the earth's constant temperatures when heating and cooling your home. While geothermal units can be pricey (as much as two-and-a-half times the cost of a typical high-end system), they make up for the initial cost through significantly lower heating and cooling costs.

Low-VOC paint

Most paint manufacturers now offer a product that emits few or no toxic fumes into your interior spaces. Five years ago, low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint was difficult to find in Cincinnati, but now it's a popular option.

Recycled-content countertops

Made from recycled products such as glass and aluminum scrap, these countertops offer an interesting alternative to granite or solid-surface materials. Plus, because they're dependent on the recycled materials available at the time, many are truly one-of-a-kind works of art.

Insulation

Good insulation can ward off drafts and lower energy bills. This is a not a place to cut corners in the budget.

Outdoor living space

This is a great way to add square footage and usable space. Plus, it has another energy-saving benefit: Instead of using your >>

PHOTOS BY RYAN KURTZ. KITCHEN (LEFT) DESIGNED BY THE KITCHEN DESIGN STUDIO AND HOFFMAN & ALBERS INTERIORS. (CENTER AND RIGHT) THE *CINCINNATI MAGAZINE* DESIGN HOME

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oven inside during the summer, cook outdoors to keep from bringing that additional heat into your home and making your air conditioner work harder.

THE HOT SPOTS

The Cincinnati area is full of great places to live especially if you are looking to build a new home.

School systems seem to be a main factor in the growth of many hot communities. Dan Dressman, executive director of the Home Builders Association of Greater Cincinnati, cites northern suburbs such as Mason and West Chester as growing communities. School systems may also be a factor in the attractiveness of more established neighborhoods such as Wyoming, Madeira and Mariemont.

Another hot area is Northside with its growing number of small businesses and urban feel. Those looking on the west side of Cincinnati will find a lot of new building happening in Green Township.

Over the river in Northern Kentucky, buyers looking to build can find more great communities. Brian Miller, executive vice president of the Home Builders Association of Northern Kentucky, is seeing some growth in urban areas such as Newport, yet the majority of activity is still concentrated in the more suburban neighborhoods such as Hebron and Independence. Northern Kentucky might be even more attractive with the New Home Tax Credit, available to qualified buyers of new homes before July 26, 2010.

HOME-BUILDING HINTS

Building a new home can be a learning experience—to say the least. Fortunately, many, *many* homeowners have taken the crash-course before you. To help you learn from their experience, we've compiled a few key tips from building experts. Here's how to take your dream from dirt and framing to shingles and paint with fewer costly mistakes.

Research your builder. Ask for references and follow up with them. Research your builder through the Better Business Bureau, Angie's List, the *Cincinnati Magazine* Home & Garden Resource Guide Online Directory and customer references. "This tough market has flushed out most of the marginal builders, but still the consumer needs to be cautious," says John Hueber, president of John Hueber Homes.

Create a detailed contract. Don't just trust that your builder will do everything he says; get it in writing. A written agreement ensures that those little things he said he'd take care of aren't forgotten as the job progresses.

Plan for the future. Sure you might not be ready to splurge on that third full bath downstairs, but roughing in the plumbing and other necessities can make it a lot easier when you are ready to move forward. Higher ceilings and purposeful placement of utility lines might also be a good idea in the basement for the option of finishing it off at a later date.

Think energy-efficiency when planning. Strategic placement of windows can help with energy savings. Also, the right appliances or construction materials can mean lower overall energy costs throughout the life of the home.

sources

Drees Homes
Great Traditions Homes
Greener Stock
John Hueber Homes
Zicka Homes

The contact information for these and many other building professionals is online now. Search our database at ***cincinnatimagazine.com/hgrg.***

Infrastructure, Remodeling & More

REMODELING BY DECADE

Cincinnati's impressive stock of older homes offers character and charm—but they can also come with vintage kitchens, drafty windows and outdated fixtures. From the turn-of-the-century to the 1990s, homes built in specific eras can pose specific challenges for current homeowners. If you're torn between respecting the historical integrity of an older home and trying to actually live in one in the 21st century, this is what you might be facing as far as remodeling:

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY/VICTORIAN

The colorful Victorian painted ladies and turn-of-the-century American Foursquares are known for their tall ceilings, beautiful stained-glass windows and overall charm, but they pose particular challenges for today's homeowners. Most of the issues stem from the fact that Victorians lived much differently than we do today. As one owner of a Victorian home once remarked: "This house seems to fight us at every turn."

In particular, Victorians had small, utilitarian kitchens and baths, and huge dining rooms for formal entertaining. That's the wrong configuration for today's casual style, where friends and family congregate in and around the kitchen.

Remodeling in these homes often focuses on enlarging the kitchen and opening it up to an eating area. Other remodeling targets include bathrooms and a laundry room. Four small bedrooms on the second floor can be reconfigured into three bedrooms to make room for new bathrooms or an upstairs laundry. >>

1907 CLIFTON HOME, PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ

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Another turn-of-the-century remnant: multiple staircases. Victorians liked to make grand entrances down front staircases, while small, narrow staircases in the back connected servant quarters to the kitchen. Taking out a staircase can be an option to add some square footage.

It's likely that sometime during the last 100 years a previous homeowner will have already undertaken these renovations. In evaluating the quality of recent renovations, look for: grounded outlets and properly sized electrical boxes, indicating the electrical system can handle a 21st century load; evidence that the home has been retro-fitted for insulation (most Victorians were built with no insulation); and double-pane replacement windows or a good-quality exterior storm window system. Most important, beware of spongy or bouncy floors and cracks that are getting bigger, which are signs that load-bearing joists may have been compromised during a plumbing renovation.

1920s TUDORS/COLONIALS

Tudors are marked by their gabled roofs and criss-cross of dark wood beams. Think English manor house, like the Mariemont Inn.

Colonials were popular in the 1920s, too—actually, you'll see this timeless style built in many eras. You'll recognize the signature center entry hall with staircase, flanked by a rectangular living room and dining room.

Because Tudors and colonials often featured ample room sizes, they remain fairly functional by today's standards. The biggest challenge is lighting: Low ceilings and small windows don't usher in much natural light. Windows can be enlarged during a remodel, but your best bet may be to work with an interior designer who can offer lighting—and lightening—strategies.

In the kitchen, chances are another homeowner has already upgraded fixtures and appliances, but even those may be outdated by now. If you're interested in returning to a period look, manufacturers are offering plenty of state-of-the-art options. Look for tile, cabinets and countertops in a black-and-white color scheme; glass-front cabinet doors; trough sinks; bronze or brushed nickel fixtures; and antique-look appliances (although stainless steel will work just fine, too).

1930s BUNGALOWS

Mechanical systems are a main issue with bungalows. They're just old enough to have been given their first mechanical overhaul but perhaps not quite old enough to have received the second.

If you must now replace the furnace and water heater, plan also for upgrading your electrical wiring to support the new system. Contractors say they would not be surprised to still find at least some original wiring in a bungalow today.

Plumbing also presents challenges. Drains at the time were usually cast iron, which can be very complicated to tie-in to when you're adding new plumbing. On the supply side, hopefully a previous homeowner has already replaced the pipes with copper. Original pipes may have been lead (now known to be a health hazard) or galvanized (which rust from the inside and clog up).

Along with the utilitarian upgrades, bungalow remodels may also include enlarging the kitchen, bathroom or overall floor plan by knocking out walls and rearranging the space. Decorative moldings may make placement of new outlets or A/C vents more difficult.

MID CENTURY

Mid-century Modern designers shocked homeowners of the day with open floor plans and indoor-outdoor focus. But now, those features feel a lot like our 21st century great rooms and outdoor living spaces.

Mid-century technology was not necessarily ready for Frank Lloyd Wright and his proteges, however; expect to do some work on the leak-prone flat roofs and the expansive but drafty windows. And be sure to check into the concrete block crawl space or basement constructions. These can pose some problems due to settling, so get those checked out before embarking on a remodel.

Traditional 1950s ranch homes might need a bit of reconfiguring to open the floor plans for today's living. For example, you might remove a half-bar or small planning desk in the kitchen to make room for a family-focused breakfast island or high-end appliances. These homes tended to have shorter ceilings, too; remodelers suggest opening up a non-weight-bearing living room wall into a vaulted ceiling.

1970s SPLIT-LEVELS

A brief stint with fire-prone aluminum wiring was a challenge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but it's likely that problem has already been fixed in your home. Other updates are fairly straight-forward: new energy-efficient mechanical systems and lightening up interiors characterized by dark, heavy woods. >>

MID-CENTURY MODERN HOME IN AMBERLEY VILLAGE DESIGNED BY ABROM DOMBAR, PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ

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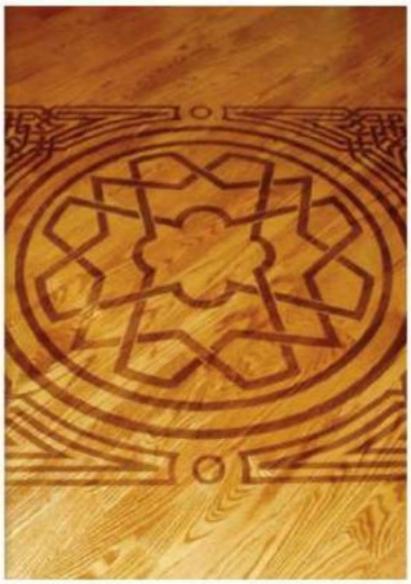

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That '70s glam is back in right now, so you might have some fun at the antique stores looking for cool chrome accessories and beanbag chairs—they'll feel right at home in your '70s pad.

The real challenge for these homes comes from the multi-level floor plans. Many remodels work to put more rooms on the same level helping with traffic patterns and the open feeling of the home. Yet, major remodels like these can be challenging because the plan must take into account the location of the other levels, which may be only 4 feet above or below the main level. You don't want to block windows on different levels.

1980s CONTEMPORARIES

Cathedral ceilings, wood paneling and stark white bathrooms are all signature characteristics of 1980s homes. Externally, if the house is made from cedar planks, these can have issues with rot, bugs and even woodpeckers. You might consider a more hardy cementitious (concrete-based) siding. If you aren't ready to make that type of investment, be sure to paint and replace any rotten boards on a regular basis.

Inside the home, the bathrooms—especially the master bathrooms—are pain points. Large bathtubs in prominent locations can take up almost half the bathroom. Many bathroom remodels take out this bathtub and expand the shower area.

1990s TRANSITIONAL

While certainly not old, homes built in the 1990s still could do with a little maintaining and possibly remodeling. Large windows are a hallmark of 1990s design. A common problem due to improper installation is a seal failure that allows moisture in between the panes. You might also think about replacing these windows with more efficient windows or windows with a UV protection in the glass to prevent fading of materials within the home. This can be pricey, especially if you're looking at replacing the commonly used Palladian-style windows.

A popular project for these homes is to finish the basement. Many 1990s builders planned for expansion, strategically including roughed-in plumbing and electrical hook-ups for future use. Higher ceilings in these basements make the final living spaces much more functional.

sources

Maile Build Remodel & Design
Pendery Construction Inc.
Kelly Bros. Design Center

The contact information for these and many other remodeling professionals is online now. Search our database at ***cincinnatimagazine.com/hgrg.***

Subcontractors

EXTERIOR EXTREMES

Freeze/thaw cycles, snow and ice storms, windstorms, humidity, droughts—the exteriors of Cincinnati homes have seen just about everything. So what does that mean in terms of maintenance? Local pros helped us compile a list of possible problems you should routinely check for so you can catch weather-related issues before they become disasters.

✓ ICE DAMMING

Ice build-up, in general, can cause a lot of damage to gutters, shingles and flashing around chimneys. Though it's unusual to see a severe ice dam problem in Cincinnati, last winter brought it home. Ice damming occurs when ice builds up on the roof. Warm interior air, leaking from an attic, can melt ice that has found its way under the shingle. Because some ice remains above, the water can't drain off the roof. Instead, it drains through the attic, which can further seep into soffits, walls and even carpeting and flooring. Ice damming can also cause damage to shingles and the roof deck.

The Fix

Complete roofing systems, such as those made by Owens Corning, offer ventilation products, felt underlayment, self-sealing ice and water barrier products and other roofing materials. Ventilation products allow trapped moisture and excess heat to escape

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from the attic. Add proper insulation and you'll keep warm interior air where it belongs, as well. The addition of gutter guards keeps large debris out of downspouts and helps prevent them from clogging, which can lead to ice damming. With these systems in place, you're less likely to see the formation of ice dams and icicles.

✔ LOOSE OR CLOGGED GUTTERS

The Fix

Clean gutters regularly, particularly in late fall if leaves, seeds and other organic matter decide to make a home in your downspouts. Check to see if extreme weather has caused the gutter to pull away from the house. Can you see light between the gutter and the side of the home? If so, hammer the nails back in. This stops run off and keeps ice from forming in the space between and creating further structural damage. Gutter guards are a good fix here, too.

✔ LEAKY, SQUEAKY DOORS

The Fix

Simple observation and maintenance are the keys. Tighten hinges and thresholds to keep everything aligned. Use a good lubricant to take care of the squeaks. Check weather stripping for wear. Older doors can be fitted with rolls of self-stick soft foam weather stripping or hard strips that are nailed into place. Newer doors may have a groove in the door specifically for the material. Simply pull out the old and insert the new.

✔ LOOSE, MISSING WINDOW CAULK

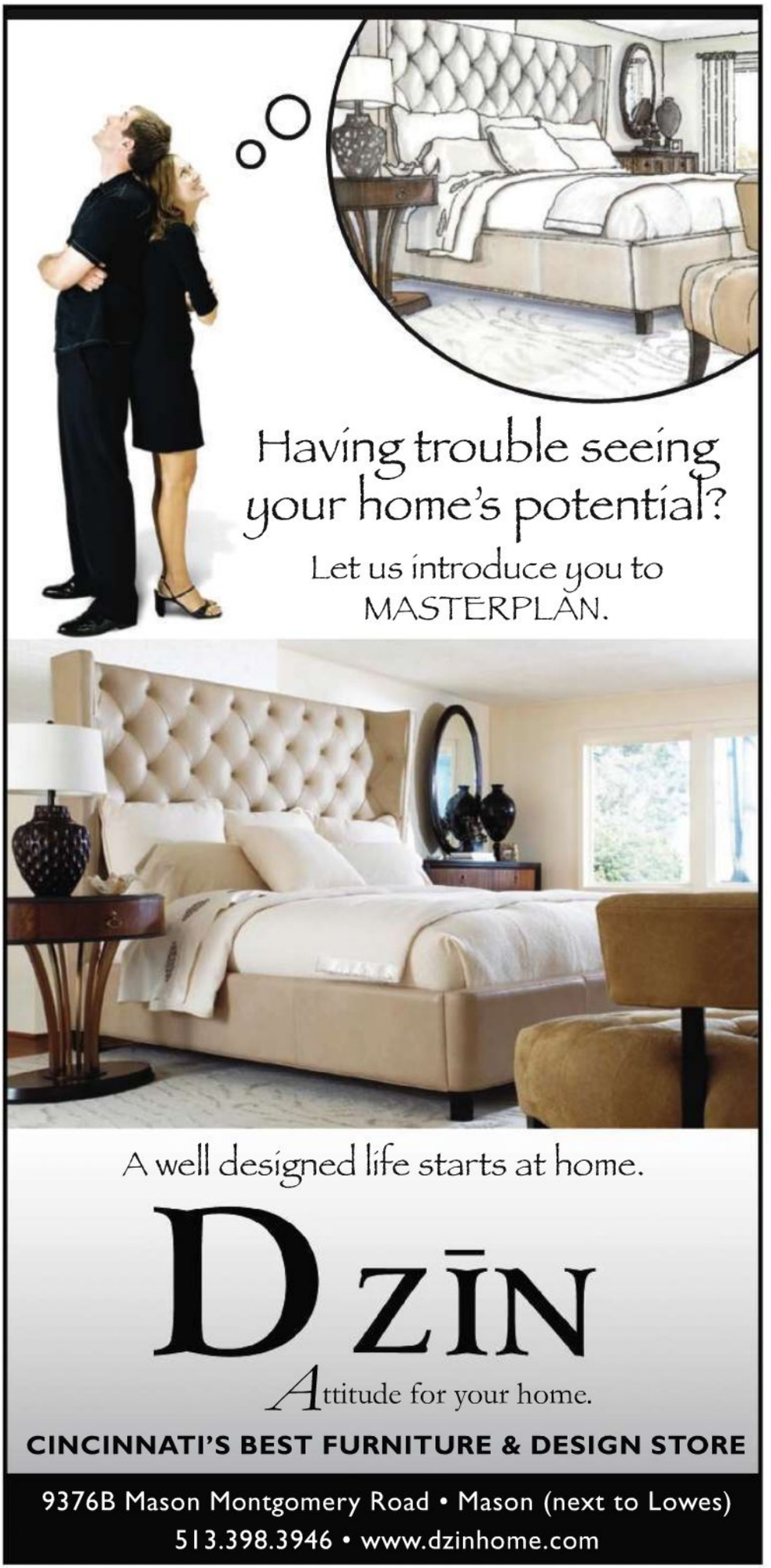
Ice that forms on the outside of windows between the sill and the pane can cause caulk to pull away or break apart. Likewise, the summer sun can bake windows, particularly those that have a southern exposure, causing the caulk to shrink. Ensuing gaps can admit water, as well as outside air.

The Fix

Scrape away the old caulk and apply new product. Be sure to use caulk that's paintable, if that's part of your plan. This simple DIY project will keep moisture from seeping into your home and help fill air gaps as well.

✔ CRUMBLING DRIVEWAY

Although concrete is nonporous, it does contain tiny unavoidable pockets or gaps. When moisture seeps into those voids and the mercury dips below freezing, that >>



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water expands 9 percent in volume and intense pressure is created (up to 15 tons per square inch). Add de-icers and salt, and you've got a recipe for potholes, cracks and sloughing in your driveway.

The Fix

Seal it with a good concrete sealer every year to every other year at the end of summer or in late fall. Before sealing, power-wash the driveway and let it dry. Purchase sealer at your local hardware store and apply it evenly, using a paint roller or sprayer.

Also, when de-icing during winter, try not to let salt linger on your concrete surfaces any more than is necessary. Salt creates additional mini freeze/thaw cycles and has the tendency to draw moisture.

✔ MISSING MORTAR

The Fix

Our freeze/thaw cycles can also cause mortar to crumble. And if water continues to seep in, those same conditions can cause bricks to crack or pop. Call a professional mason to tuck point (tucking mortar into the damaged mortar joint with the point of a trowel) to keep that moisture from doing further damage. For stair-step cracks in the mortar, call in a home inspector or a foundation contractor to assess the situation.

✔ SOIL PULLING AWAY FROM FOUNDATION

Those summer droughts can do a number on our soil. In Cincinnati, our heavy clay soil actually helps support our foundations. During times of drought, the clay hardens, shrinks and can pull away from the foundation leaving it exposed and with less support.

The Fix

A simple soaker hose can be laid along the perimeter of the home to water the soil around the foundation. Use this only during times of extended drought.

sources

WIN Home Inspection of Anderson Township
Air-Tite Home Products
Harrison Concrete
A-1 Ohio Valley RetroFoam
Kettering Roofing & Sheet Metal

The contact information for these and many other home-care professionals is online now. Search our database at cincinnatimagazine.com/hgrg.

Kitchen and Bath

TIPS OF THE TRADE

Consider these the universal remodeling projects: At some point, every homeowner is going to do something to the kitchen and bathrooms. When you do, you'll want to keep these things in mind.

REMODELING RULES

1) Know what you want.

Evaluate how you use the current space and how you would like to use it in the future. Being firm about your needs will help you separate the essential features from the luxuries. It will also provide a road map to keep you on course when the project takes unexpected turns.

Once you've narrowed down your needs, think about your overall design sensibility. Are you going for a Zen feel in your bathroom? Do you want a kitchen inspired by a villa in Italy? Print or cut out pictures of rooms that represent the look you want and pass those along to your designer.

2) Shop for the right remodeling professional.

Search your community for a trusted remodeling professional; the time spent on this upfront will pay off handsomely in the end. Talk with friends and family members, look at previous work by potential designers. You may also consult professional organizations such as the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) or the Directory of Professional Remodelers at the National Association of Home Builders' website (nahb.org). Then, go with your gut. Do you get along with this contractor? Is he listening to you? Do you feel that he understands what you are looking for?

3) Old doesn't mean unusable.

To be sustainable, eco-friendly and just plain sensible with your money, always look at your existing kitchen or bathroom with an eye toward what can be reused in the remodel. Your cabinets might just need to be refaced to offer the fresh look you want, or you might be able to reuse your current lighting.

4) Understand your budget.

You need two numbers: The amount you're comfortable spending and the top spending limit you can hit if unexpected costs arise. Make sure your designer really understands your numbers—remember, any great designer can work within a budget.

5) Don't skimp on quality.

While you always want to keep your eye on the bottom line, don't lose sight of the big picture. Quality products and quality work might cost more upfront, but over >>

CROFT RESIDENCE IN EAST PRICE HILL, PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ

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time that could mean less in maintenance or replacement costs. "The most expensive thing you can do is doing something twice," says Karen Kinsella, designer with Kinsella Kitchens & Baths.

STAYING POWER

Home sellers walk a fine line: You want your house to stand out in a buyer's mind, but you don't want to be remembered as the house with the ugly red bathroom. If you're selling—and even if you're planning to stay in your home for a while—the maximum return on your investment comes from a remodel with longevity.

Be trendy in small doses. Keep your foundation pieces neutral, but bring in color with less expensive accessories.

Splurge where it counts. Think about spending big on a focal point such as a countertop or that stainless-steel gas range.

Understand quality. Think long-term usability. Plus, realize that buyers are savvy, and they can tell when you've gone for economy.

Pick your finishes carefully. Go for a rubbed bronze or brushed nickel for an up-to-date but timeless look. For cabinetry, think about something in a medium to medium-dark tone.

Make sure it's functional. Be thoughtful about how you arrange cabinets, doors and hanging racks. You want enough clearance to easily maneuver through the space.

Don't forget to think about cleaning time as well. In a busy bathroom, would it be smarter to pick an undermount sink instead of a vessel bowl?

sources

Bath Inspirations
Don Justice Cabinet Makers
Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery
Innerwood & Company
Kelly Bros. Design Center
Kinsella Kitchens and Baths

The contact information for these and many other kitchen and bath professionals is online now. Search our database at cincinnatimagazine.com/hgrg.

Flooring, Tile & Carpet

STAGE PRESENCE

Flooring is like the backdrop of a room. When it works well, it's designed to be upstaged perfectly by the furniture. When it doesn't, it can ruin the whole show. Here's what flooring experts say is playing now or coming soon to Cincinnati homes.

WHAT'S FLOORING PEOPLE RIGHT NOW?

Frieze and shag—Designers in recent years have reinvented the old '70s shags by playing with the texture and even adding in cool materials such as ribbons and metallic fibers. They offer a relaxed, casual look. And because they don't look perfectly manicured when they're new, they wear very well. These styles are most popular with younger homeowners because, honestly, they remind older homeowners too much of their 1970s predecessors.

Two-tone carpet—Blending fibers of two slightly different shades into one carpet creates a soft, heathered look. The subtle variation adds depth, and it hides dirt and spills much better than the smoother, velvety styles.

Hardwoods, new and old—Wood flooring is always popular in Cincinnati, especially oak and cherry. Prices are climbing, however (it's a domino effect of a downturn in furniture manufacturing), so experts say now's the time to buy if you're in the market. Many who already have hardwood floors are opting for refinishing—after all, reusing old materials is the most environmentally friendly remodeling project you can do. And, with our huge supply of older homes, there are a ton of high-quality existing floors out there. It can be economical, too; rough estimates for refinishing are about $2.50 to $3 per square foot, compared to about $8 per square foot on average for a typical new installation.

Renewable materials—Bamboo and cork are extremely popular choices for homeowners looking for a renewable resource. Cork has the added benefit of being significantly quieter than wood or ceramic tile—but it's a softer material and does wear more quickly than wood, particularly in high-traffic areas.

Slate-looks—Real slate is stunning, and it offers that earthy look many homeowners are after today—but it's high-maintenance. It needs to be re-sealed regularly, and if you take a wrong step, it can crack. Slate-look ceramics are popular for offering the appearance of slate with the durability of ceramic.

LCL (Level-cut loop) carpets—This carpet style blends plush, cut fibers with >>

FRIEZE CARPET IN THE MASTER BEDROOM OF THE *CINCINNATI MAGAZINE* DESIGN HOME, PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ

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loop fibers of the same color to create subtle patterns, such as basket weave, bamboo or acanthus leaves. It's an updated way to achieve a classic, elegant look.

Asian-influenced design—Particularly in the high-end wool carpets, you'll see design inspirations from Asia and the Middle East. Look for Modern twists on traditional-style patterns, such as a Moroccan motif updated with the addition of silk fibers.

Alterna or Dura Ceramic—This limestone-based tile product with a vinyl-coated top is easy to install and durable. It's mid-range price makes it a happy medium between vinyl and ceramic.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

Home décor is no different these days than music and movies—we can order, download and design exactly what we want.

"You can go to a rug showroom and pick out a general rug, but if you want something that says 'this is my house, this is my style, this is my creation,' there's no better way to do it than a custom rug," says

Lisa Ryan, a designer and sales associate at the Florence, Ky., location of McSwain Carpets & Floors.

Custom rugs are made by joining together pieces of all different carpets to create an original design or pattern. The pieces are heat-set on the back of the carpet so that the seams are invisible on the front. They're as durable as solid carpet, too, barring any major disturbances like a pet digging directly on a seam.

A custom rug can be made in any shape and size, and there are no limits to the designs. If it can be drawn, it can be made into a rug. You're not limited by texture or manufacturer, either—nearly any carpets can be combined together into one rug. Even tapestry fabric can be blended with carpet for a very sophisticated, formal (however, less durable) look.

Design inspiration can come from wallpaper, stained-glass windows, family crests, paintings, paint swatches, pets—anything you might want to highlight in your home. The rugs can be used year round, as seasonal flair or even hung as wall art.

Pricing depends on many factors: complexity of the design, the use of beveling or not, adding a monk's cloth backing to the finished product, the carpets used and labor. Your custom rug typically should be ready in about four to six weeks.

—Elyse Roth

sources

The Rug Gallery
McSwain Carpets & Floors
Bluford Jackson & Son Inc.

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Landscaping, Hardscaping & Gardens

BY THE YARD

Advice for meeting our signature Cincinnati landscape challenges.

UP-HILL BATTLING

Our ubiquitous Cincinnati sloping yards can be a homeowner headache, but a few techniques can turn even the most tumultuous terrain into a gorgeous functional garden.

Leveling Off

Outdoor entertaining space is valuable real estate everywhere, hillside dwellings included. While it's common to mask a graded yard with a large porch or deck, homeowners are now maximizing the potential of their vertical landscapes either by digging out and regrading the lawn or by building hardscapes and retaining walls into the existing slope.

Commonly made out of wood beams, brick or concrete, a retaining wall supports the full weight and pressure of a hillside, allowing a flat surface to be constructed at the wall's base. Depending on the lay of their land, homeowners can create anything from a single large patio supported by one long retaining wall, to a tiered landscape featuring multiple surfaces flanked by retaining walls, with seating areas, staircases and gardens scattered along the grade.

Retaining walls can be both expensive and labor intensive (estimates for concrete walls start at around $20 per square foot), but the results are often phenomenal. While authentic brick and stone materials drive the price even higher, new advances in concrete patterns and stains can create a similar high-end look for a fraction of the price. Well-built retaining walls are virtually maintenance free and will last for generations, but a poorly built wall with improper drainage can do serious damage to both the landscape and any surrounding structures. >>

CUSTOM RUG COURTESY OF MCSWAIN CARPETS & FLOORS. LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY MSTEELEDESIGN, PHOTO BY GARY KESSLER

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Taking Root

Experts say the most important thing to do when landscaping a sloping yard is to anchor the soil using plenty of trees and plants. To further decrease surface runoff, cover all plant beds with a thick layer of rocks or mulch, about 3 inches deep. You can add interest to bare spots by incorporating signature items like dry creek beds, potted plants, water features, sculptures or even large rocks into the hillside. Depending on the severity of the slope, at least one-third of each object should be dug into the soil to ensure the item stays firmly placed as the landscape matures.

THE "C" WORD: CONQUERING CLAY SOIL

New gardeners complain bitterly about Cincinnati's clay soil, but experienced landscapers are quick to point out that plants have been growing here successfully for millions of years. This is what you really need to know about gardening in clay:

The Challenge

Clay is a dense soil composed of very small, tightly bonded sediments. Though clay is richer in nutrients than loose sandy soils, its thick composition is extremely difficult for air and water to penetrate and thus inhospitable to most plant varieties. The density of clay also inhibits trees and shrubs from expanding their roots in the soil, causing plants to be weak and less capable of retaining water and nutrients. Finally, clay's high pH is far from ideal for growing, as most plant species are unsuited for alkaline environments.

Making it Grow

The best way to tame a clay landscape is to reconstitute plant beds with a good soil amendment. Loose materials such as compost, manure, pine fines, peat moss and mulch can all be mixed into topsoil to help break up clay, balancing the pH and making the ground porous enough to let air and moisture in and for plants to take root. Any of these natural amendments will do the job, but compost will add the most nutrients to the soil. Remember that trees, too, need help battling clay soil. Certified arborists offer soil remediation to help tree roots get the nutrients they need.

It's important to fortify the entire landscape rather than individual areas. Since clay naturally blocks moisture, gardens planted in an amended basin surrounded by clay will quickly drown when the basin fills with displaced water. To ensure plants grow successfully, mix a hearty soil amendment deep into the entire plant bed and top the surface with a generous layer of compost, which will manage excess water.

While most plants will grow fairly well in amended clay soil, some plant varieties prove more successful than others. Ash, willow and river birch trees are all nicely suited for heavier soils, as are shrubs such as juniper, lilac, barberry and forsythia. Ornamental grasses such as switchgrass and Indiangrass also adapt well to clay, as do other perennials like coneflower, Gayfeather and goldenrod.

In general, your best chance for success comes from purchasing locally grown native plants—they're already acclimated to the area's soil and climate.

IS THE EMERALD ASH BORER REALLY A BIG DEAL?

Yes, this little insect has killed millions of ash trees in the U.S. and is expected to kill millions more as it spreads. It arrived in Cincinnati in 2006, and since then it has done the most damage in the hot spots of Liberty Township and Anderson Township. Tim Back, owner of Back Tree Service, says our ash trees can be saved if treated in advance. The trunk injection method appears to have the highest success rate.

sources

Cincinnati Landscape Design Build Group
RKC Increte Systems
Seiler's Landscaping
Back Tree Service

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CINCINNATI LANDSCAPE DESIGN BUILD GROUP

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Appliances & Electronics

KEEPING CURRENT

Few things advance faster—but need to last longer—than our appliances and electronics. Here's how to keep up with the latest buzz in technology.

I WANT THAT!

Check out some of the coolest appliances at local stores this year:

A true green machine, **the ENERGY STAR-qualified Whirlpool Cabrio HE Top Load Washer** (MSRP: $1,199) uses 71 percent less water and 69 percent less energy than a conventional top-loading washer, saving up to 24 gallons of water per load. Flexible wash plates allow for a more customizable clean, with 14 user-friendly automatic wash cycles including a "Bulky Items" cycle, a "Whitest Whites" cycle and a convenient "Quick Wash" mode. Five selectable water temperatures help prevent color fade and shrinkage, while delayed start time and estimated time-remaining features help simplify laundry day for absent-minded homeowners.

The Viking QuietCool Side-By-Side Refrigerator/Freezer (MSRP: $7,779; $8,579 for ice/water in the door) improves upon traditional refrigeration methods using a number of cutting-edge features. The unit has a unique ProChill Temperature Management System, featuring a state-of-the-art compressor that allows for >>

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Take the guesswork out of cooking with the **Wolf 48" Dual-Fuel Range** (MSRP: $13,265 as pictured with griddle). This range is loaded with special features that make cooking a breeze, including two electric ovens with the Wolf dual convection system that delivers even temperature and airflow throughout the cooking process. Optional charbroiler, French top and griddle provide versatility.

Dirty dishes have met their match in the **Bosch 800 Plus Series Dishwasher** (MSRP: $2,099, model SHV68E13UC), the quietest and most energy-efficient dishwasher in the U.S. Six wash cycles featuring variable spray pressures automate to the size of each load, while SaniDry and OptiDry drying technologies ensure a squeaky-clean, spotless finish every time. The ENERGY STAR-qualified washer saves energy with an adjustable top storage rack and a handy half-load option, catering the energy output to the specific size of each job.

MEDIA SAVVY

Rapid advances in media technology have made selecting the right home theater equipment a daunting task. While there are a number of ways to preserve your home's existing media equipment, hot new technologies are making home theater systems more streamlined than ever.

Using what you have

CD players and VCRs are aging fast, but it is possible to incorporate your existing items into a new home theater system. VHS and DVD players, for example, will both work on new HD TVs when connected with an RCA-type (composite) cable. The images will appear much grainier in high definition, particularly on widescreen and LCD TVs.

"Here's the thing," says Troy Hanson of Hanson Audio Video in Dayton. "CD players, standard DVDs, VCRs are all old technology, but so is a record player. It's all about knowing what those things would or would not do, and why you would or would not have them."

For example, for audiophiles who relish the uncompressed sound of an authentic

vinyl record, Hanson still sells turntables—about one a week, he notes. Those who are into optimum convenience are leaving CDs behind and opting for systems such as Rhapsody or Pandora radio. With Pandora, a free service, listeners can tune in on an iPhone, a Blu-ray Disc player or through the Internet and listen to personalized picks determined by favorite tunes and musicians. Rhapsody allows you to listen to self-selected music from a computer or mobile application, even download tunes to an mp3 player. It's instant gratification for about $10 a month.

To update your sound system, consider investing in newer and smaller amplifiers and speakers. These items can be purchased individually so long as the output of the speakers matches the level tolerated by the sound system's amplifier. For example: a 6Ω amplifier must be equipped with a 6Ω speaker, to ensure good sound quality and avoid overexertion of the equipment. Compatibility between all components is crucial, so be sure to read the owner's manual on all existing pieces and consult a professional before combining equipment.

Most people now download and store media files on the computer, but if you're not ready to give up discs just yet, you may want to opt for Blu-ray over DVDs: Blu-ray features high-definition video and high-resolution audio, the wave of the future in A/V technology. Do keep in mind, however, that Blu-ray Discs and DVDs require their own respective playing systems.

Investing in the future

The hottest trend in home theater technology is the digital media receiver—any device that uses an Internet connection to access media files from either a website or a computer hard drive. Digital media receivers can connect to the Internet using either a WiFi or Ethernet connection and can stream files from a home computer straight to a connected TV or stereo.

VIKING QUIETCOOL SIDE-BY-SIDE REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER, PHOTO COURTESY OF THE APPLIANCE LOFT

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Digital media receivers have varying capabilities, ranging from a simple music-playing function to full web access on the TV. While several electronics manufacturers now sell digital media receivers, the most practical all-in-one entertainment systems on the market are actually video game consoles. The Nintendo Wii, Sony PlayStation 3 and Microsoft Xbox 360 are all digital media receivers, each boasting a unique set of features, including Blu-ray and DVD players, instant movie downloads, digital music players, web browsers and more.

For those who are ready to make room for a whole new home theater system or to invest in the latest in smart-home efficiency, if you dream it, experts say they can do it.

An assessment of your needs helps pinpoint the options. For a home theater, this includes best placement for comfortable viewing and sound immersion, as well as the perfect television application for indoor/outdoor areas. For instance, some televisions are waterproof for use around pool areas, while some play super-deep black levels making them a better fit for dark lower-level media rooms. For smart-home efficiency, options include systems that can provide security functions with IP cameras and keypad/remote door locks. Lighting, blinds and coffeemakers can all be programmed—to display front-door callers on your TV monitor, turn off lights as you leave for work, close blinds at night or begin your favorite brew at pre-determined times. One of Hanson's clients even has a sensor in his chair that turns on his favorite nightly news programming when he sits down in the evening. Talk about convenient.

Today's televisions are web-enabled and when networked include applications that allow you to receive weather forecasts, view pictures, listen to music, play kids' games and download movies from Internet services such as Netflix. Remotes are networked as well, so you no longer have to point and click. Just click from any room of the house or tap a touch screen/keypad on the wall.

sources

The Appliance Loft
Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery
Hanson Audio Video
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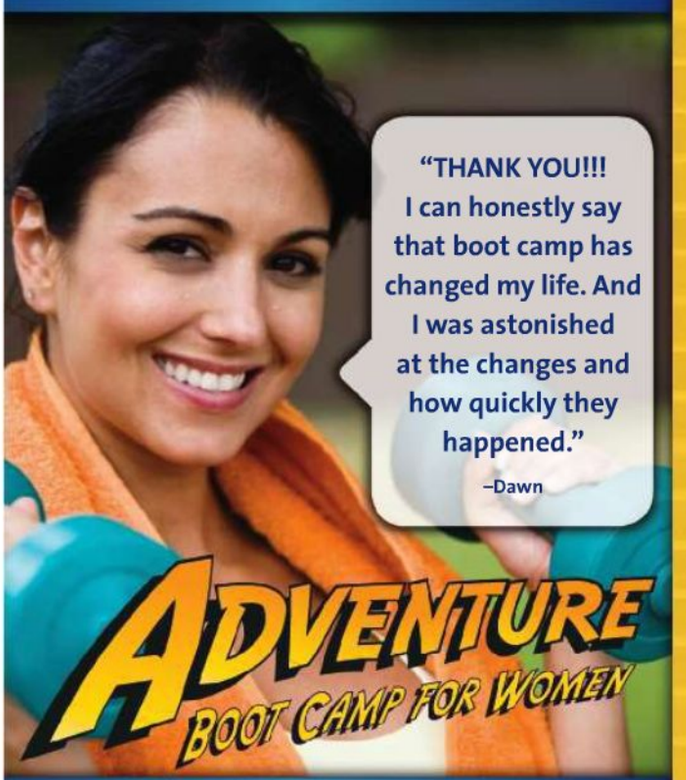

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Interior Design

CINCINNATI STYLE

We're not a Charleston or a Santa Fe where a signature design predominates, but we Cincinnatians do have a style all our own. According to local designers, this is what we're all about right now.

WHAT IS CINCINNATI STYLE?

As a group, we're very **green**. With many LEED and ENERGY STAR projects happening all over the city, Cincinnati is embracing green technology. Design-wise, we're seeing that play out in:

recycled materials—countertops, flooring and tile made from recycled glass and metal

natural materials—sisal, cork, bamboo, stone, even ceramics that are made to look like natural products

earth tones—including shades of…naturally...green

With our strong Creative Class in areas such as Downtown and Northside, we're also finding our inner artists with a renewed appreciation for **handmade design** elements. Younger homeowners with smaller budgets are making their own style with easy DIY home decorating projects. More established homeowners love custom looks created by local artists, as well as interior designs that showcase and celebrate their art collections.

Visitors to our city often describe Cincinnatians as **traditional**. Plenty of us are, but we're also mid-century Modern and contemporary, too. No, designers say "traditional" doesn't refer to our furniture style. Susan Moore, owner of Decorating Den Interiors, explains our traditional side as being "slow to commit to new trends"—in whatever design genre we favor. Not prepared to overhaul our interiors every three to four years as trend-setting dictates, we prefer to be trendy in accent

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MT. ADAMS PATIO DESIGNED BY COLLIN NEALEY, PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ

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pillows and accessories, opting for more timeless styles in the bigger pieces. We're also **practical**, favoring multifunctional pieces (like storage ottomans and cocktail tables that lift and extend to serve dinner) that transition as our needs change. And whether our furnishings are antiques or Danish Modern, we're becoming more **casual**, opening our homes to family and friends for relaxed entertaining.

Much of that entertaining has moved **outdoors**—we're all about our outdoor spaces. First it was bringing the outdoors in, decorating our homes with outdoor fountains and nature-inspired accessories. Now the indoors is coming out, with furniture, rugs and lighting that looks just like you pulled it outside from your living room. Our outdoor spaces *are* living rooms to us, with comfortable seating (no more rubber-slatted loungers, thank you), high-tech music and lighting systems, and gourmet cooking spaces just steps away.

TREND-SPOTTER

If accessories are where we like to experiment with trends, 2010 is proving to be an interesting year. You're probably already noticing:

Birds, birds and more birds, including owls, Charley Harper's cardinals, nests and eggs.

Funky recycled accessories made from gum wrappers, license plates, postage stamps, game pieces, you name it.

"Creepy-beautiful" animals, such as bugs and rats. Leah Spurrier, senior designer and partner at HighStreet says we've been through cute and "beautiful-beautiful" (like the birds that have been around for a while), so now artists are going a little darker.

Wallpaper. It's in, it's out, it's back in. This time it's being used on just a wall or two to add a focal point, functioning kind of like a large piece of art.

Pattern. We're going to be seeing two things: clean, contemporary geometric designs at one end of the spectrum and exquisitely elaborate designs (like Moroccan-inspired motifs) on the other. The midpoint between the two styles—the Baroque-inspired scrolls in Mod colors—is still in the stores right now, and that's what got us ready to handle the heavy pattern that's coming.

Blues are back in, particularly turquoise paired with apple green. Purple is big this year, too, especially in rugs. Color in general is taking a starring role as many design schemes incorporate a pop of color against a more neutral backdrop. You'll also see black and white with splashes of red.

sources

D ZIN
Renaissance Garden Ornament
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Home Furnishings

INVESTMENT PIECES

Permission to splurge—a room-by-room guide for where to put your biggest budget dollars.

Living Room

If this is your formal entertaining space, make it a showroom with a stunning piece of art or a luxurious area rug. Just don't forget to visit it often, even when you're not entertaining.

Family Room

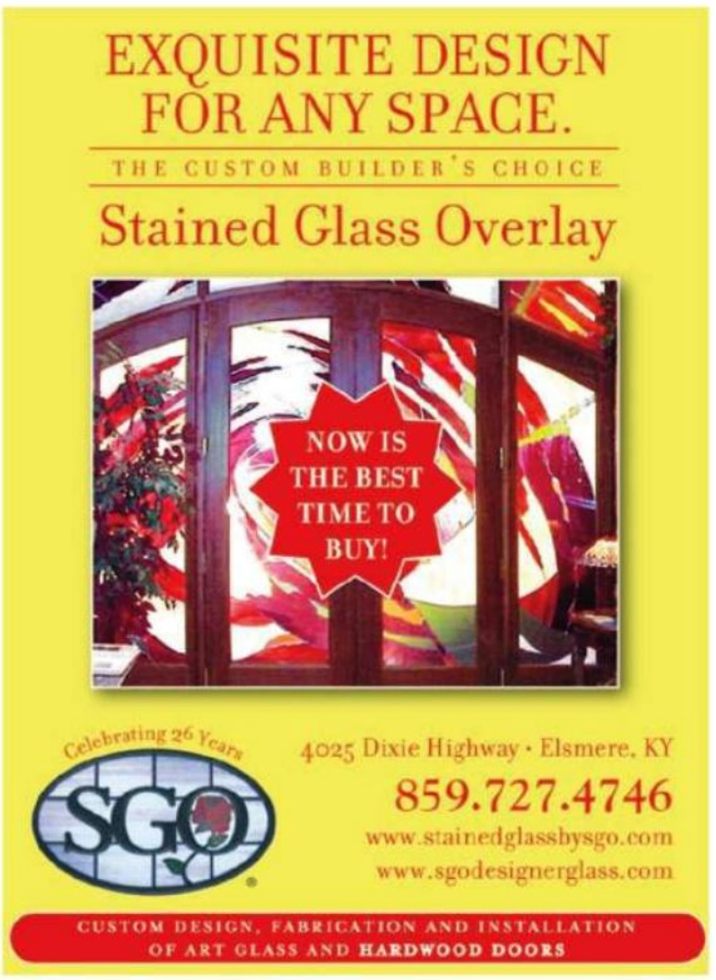
Since this is where you're relaxing and watching TV, it's tempting to break the bank on a top-of-the-line media system. That's great, but save plenty of money for seating. You need a high-quality sofa or sectional that's comfortable and built to last—especially since it's the anchor for the rest of the room's furnishings. On the showroom floor you may not immediately recognize which sofa is in it for the long haul. Designers say that quality of the stitching and density of the cushions are good indicators. Nicer upholstery is usually worth the investment, too—it can last 10-15 years. Some low-end fabrics begin to look shabby after only a year.

Bedroom

Look to the room's primary function for your splurge item here; experts say a good mattress is priority No. 1. It's hard to argue with their logic: You can't have a good day without a good night's sleep. Luxurious bedding is a close second—few household items make you feel quite so pampered.

Dining Room

The table is certainly the most prominent piece in the room, but when used properly it's disguised under tablecloths and placesettings. That's why the chandelier is the showpiece of the dining room. It's like wearing the perfect necklace, designers say—it's the jewelry of the room. The splurge principle can be applied to your lighting choices in general. Many of your lighting needs can be addressed with sim-



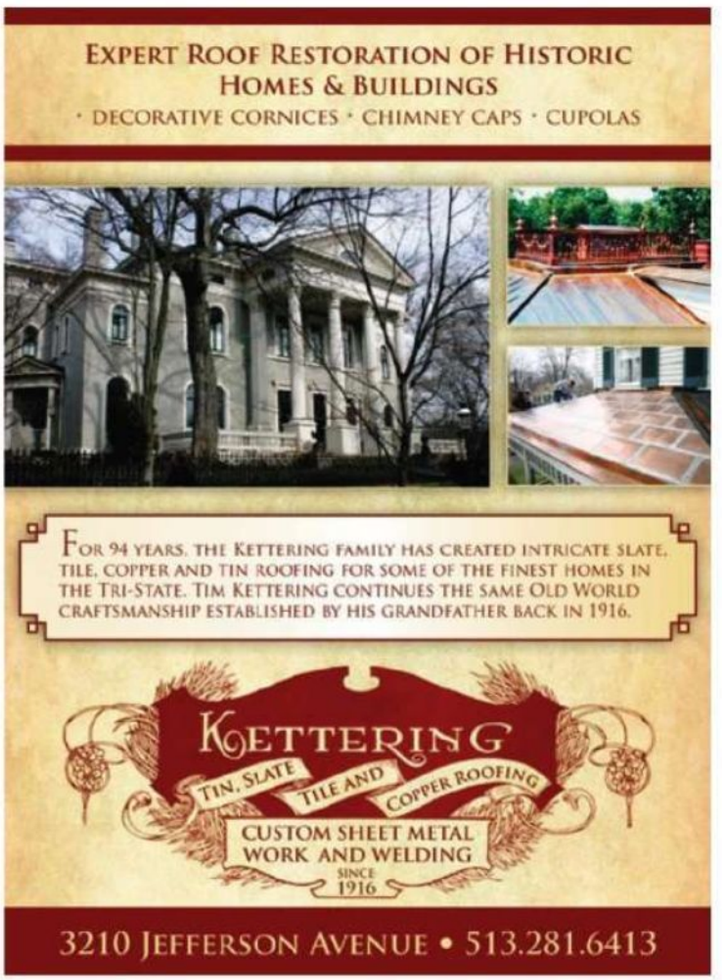


PHOTO BY RYAN KURTZ. DINING ROOM DESIGNED BY HOUSE OF FRANCE

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ple recessed fixtures, saving the impact for a few well-placed dramatic fixtures in the dining room, great room or entry hall.

Utility Rooms: Closets, Garages and Mudrooms

Closet companies market custom organization as the remodeling project with the most bang for your buck. And with an extensive selection of materials and finishes, it doesn't even have to be a splurge. The payout is huge: ease of living and more time to enjoy the rest of the rooms in your house.

Impulse Splurging: A Rule of Thumb

Regardless of the room, when you choose to indulge make sure you're doing so on the right piece, the one that will get along and play well with all the rest of your furniture. Too many homeowners fall in love with an armoire and invite it home, only to discover that it's scaled too small or it throws the whole room out of balance. Interior designers can help you create an overall plan for your home; that way you'll be able to recognize that perfect piece to splurge on when you see it. "The key is to avoid costly mistakes," says Daniel Grubb, owner of D ZIN.

JUST WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED

Grandma's chest. As a child, you admired the intricate carving and blend of inlaid woods. But then…you grew up to be classic Modern. Will you find a place in your home for this family heirloom?

"We absolutely endorse the irreverent mixing of various styles," says Leah Spurrier, senior designer and partner at HighStreet. Good design, she says, is all about blending shapes, styles and textures. Here are the rules:

Think layers. Layering different styles is what creates balance in a room. Don't buy the dining chairs that match the table; add a layer of interest by pairing a sleek table with more ornate chairs, or vice versa.

Mix materials. You don't want all woods or all upholstery. Mix in metals, different kinds of wood, ceramics and glass. That's where the texture comes from.

Give each piece a complement. Hang a funky contemporary mirror above Grandma's chest, or use a chrome-and-glass light fixture above a Victorian dining table. Pairing something old with something new in

spirit is what keeps the room from being a museum at one end of the spectrum or a furniture store at the other.

sources

HighStreet
Switch Lighting & Design
D ZIN
Decorating Den Interiors
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a growing passion

written by KAYDEE WILSON
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8 RULES FOR CREATING THE GARDEN OF YOUR DREAMS

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Inside every non-gardener is a mistaken assumption: that you're either born with a green thumb or you're not. As it turns out, green thumbs can be acquired.

John and Amy Duke hadn't picked up a shovel until they retired in 1991. Looking to get involved in a new hobby, they set about transforming their garden in Hartwell. By 1996, they had become serious about daylilies. In 1998, John earned his Master Gardener credentials. Today, the garden has become a paradise.

During the waning days of winter, the couple's budding hellebores and flowering magnolia butterflies cheerfully welcome warmer weather ahead. A few weeks later the entire garden bursts awake, as hundreds of daylilies, begonias and plants of all varieties bloom over their meticulously planted beds. Spring has finally sprung when the tiered leaves of their wedding cake tree (*Cornus controversa* 'Variegata') swallow up the front bay window of the white two-story house.

A shady, winding oasis—complete with a log cabin, miniature railroad and an eerie, graveyard-themed area known only as "the bog"—John and Amy's garden lovingly mixes the mystique of Ernest Hemingway's Key West estate with the playful nostalgia of A.A. Milne's fictional Hundred Acre Wood. All their own is the sense of humor visitors will find in every garden bed. Among the crowd pleasers: the miniature bathroom sculpture labeled "Bird Bath" and the signage over the composting bins reading "A Frond Farewell" and "A Waste of Thyme."

As a Master Gardener, John Duke teaches classes at the Civic Garden Center of Greater Cincinnati, helping other garden hopefuls find their green thumbs. What follows is some of the Dukes' best advice.

1. Start with research.

With the exception of a few trees lining the perimeter of their yard, John and Amy had a blank canvas to work with when they started. Inexperienced, and accustomed to little more than mowing grass,

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the couple decided to do their homework before they started planting.

The extra effort paid off. John's research into the soil composition around their home prompted them to shop for acidic plants, which they learned would balance out the pH and thrive in their alkaline soil. After attending a meeting of the American Hemerocallis Society, the couple received their first plants: 39 daylilies, a gift that not only inspired their first bed, but launched a love affair with the flower that can be seen throughout their whole garden.

The Dukes advise prospective gardeners to start out by attending introductory gardening courses, getting involved with local gardening clubs, and speaking with the experts at a good garden store. These resources teach the important basics, such as which plant varieties work well together, how to avoid stumbling blocks such as root competition, and how to select the right space for your beds. When it is time to start planting, Amy suggests sticking with hearty varieties such as boxwood, viburnum and oakleaf hydrangea. These shrubs can take a beating, so they're not likely to discourage first-timers.

2. Build from the bones up.

"There are three things to consider when starting a garden," John says. "Sun, soil and water." To make sure each plant gets enough of all three, he recommends planting a bed starting with the biggest plants—trees and shrubs, or "the bones"—first, and filling in with smaller items in seasons later on. Allowing large trees and shrubs enough space to grow outward will help prevent root competition, and also give an idea of how much shade the big plants will cast on surrounding beds as they grow tall.

3. Pair plants with care.

While planting by size is a good guideline, it's crucial also to keep in mind how different plant varieties of the same size will interact. The Dukes have learned this lesson the hard way a few times, like when they decided to plant water-loving hosta underneath their dry purple smoke bush. "I never did get that watering right," recalls John, who finally decided to replace the smoke bush with a thirstier river birch. To avoid a similar mistake, research the care guidelines for each new plant, and group varieties with similar needs in the same beds.

4. Invest in color.

Though they plant dozens of annuals each spring, the Dukes have also made it a point to invest in perennials, which will give their garden color year after year. One of Amy's favorite colored perennials is the coleus, a variegated plant available in several varieties that maintains its color long after annuals have faded out. While their thoughtfully placed evergreens maintain a hint of color in the colder months, the Dukes aren't afraid to let a few leaves and dead plant matter settle in the yard during the winter, either. "Leaves are great for the earthworms," Amy says. "And besides, brown is a color, too," she adds.

5. Use natural materials.

A certified Master Composter who teaches composting classes to the public, John is a firm believer in keeping soil amendments and gardening techniques as natural as possible. Crediting compost as the secret behind their lush and healthy plants, he advises gardeners to steer clear of the harsh chemicals found in synthetic mulches and fertilizers.

"Synthetics contain a lot of salt. That salt destroys a lot of the organic life in the soil. It ruins the soil structure, weakens the plants and makes them more susceptible to diseases and insects," he explains.

To start turning your own food and yard waste into a valuable soil amendment, read the composting article online at **cincinnatimagazine.com/hg.**

6. Get creative with containers.

More than 500 permanent plants, along with extra annuals, have forced John and Amy to get inventive with space. One of Amy's favorite tricks is to place pots of different shapes and sizes in or alongside beds. Keeping certain plants in containers allows her to incorporate delicate species into areas where they would normally not survive among surrounding plants. The containers also make it easy to bring warm-weather varieties indoors during the winter, and to elevate or accentuate plants that would otherwise get lost in the undergrowth.

Balance, not bulk, is the key to creating the perfect container arrangement. "You really don't have to make containers elaborate," Amy says. "But you do need something tall, something medium and something trailing. That's the principle I use in planting containers." She recommends varieties such as begonia and cordyline for height and width, and sweet potato vine for trailers that flow over container walls.

7. Keep faith during damage.

Cincinnati weather can be hard on plants, especially young trees and shrubs. While it's easy to get discouraged by damage, the Dukes advise fellow gardeners to keep in mind that down doesn't always mean out.

In the fall of 2008, for example, strong winds from Hurricane Ike all but destroyed a 'Forest Pansy' redbud in their backyard. A few months later an ice storm knocked down the river birch alongside their driveway, trapping their car and leaving them immobile for a few days. Both times they took a wait-and-see approach before doing any drastic cutting. The decision was the right one: The hole created by the downed limbs from the 'Forest Pansy' was just enough to create a sunny opening, allowing the smaller plants previously in the tree's shadow to thrive. The river birch also made a full recovery after John propped it up with a shovel once the ice had melted away.

8. Know when to say when.

Though they've been able to save a few of their plants over the years, the Dukes have also learned when it's time to say goodbye. They've pulled out or cut down a number of troublesome plants, either to avoid nasty falls (they once had one of their trees break off onto a neighbor's roof), bring in more sunshine, or to make room for new beds. Amy considers making these executive decisions all part of a gardening process she and John love.

"You should give plants time to see whether they'll recover," she says, "But don't be afraid to take them down. For every plant that comes out, there's an opportunity for another plant to grow anew."

And by all means, maintain your sense of humor about gardening. A tour of the Dukes' garden might also include a stop by a Chinese urn, filled to overflowing with plant tags and positioned next to a framed picture of a hosta in its prime. It's a memorial, of course—to all the plants that have perished along the journey. ■

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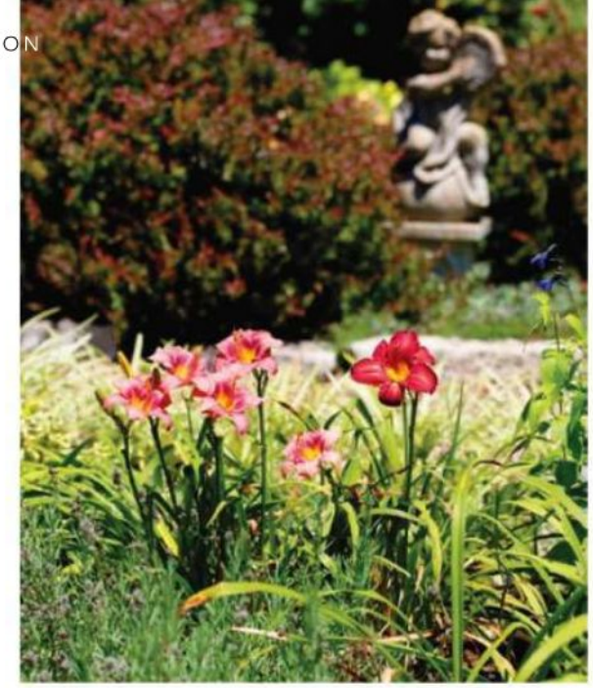

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struction sites," he said, his voice low and steady. "No strategic plans, no audit, no monitoring software—there are still no African-Americans on these sites, and yet you want us to be quiet," he continued, his voice rising. "You all are engaging in public policy that looks like the 1920s and the 1930s!" He was shouting now, voice fully stoked. "What do we need to do to get you to understand we need a strategic plan *tonight*? What you have is 98 percent white men feeding off this construction budget like welfare"—explosive applause—"and you ask us why we are shooting one another in the street? It's because We. Don't. Have. Jobs." The crowd erupted in whoops and sustained clapping.

It felt like a far-fetched correlation. Could the CPS contractor oversight really have repercussions deep enough to make a black man so desperate for construction work that he'd shoot another black man dead? It's a tricky trickle-down.

Despite the rhetoric and bombast, the two factions reached a kind of détente. At the May meeting the board unanimously approved a "community benefits agreement" that had been drafted in the fall, which set employment edicts for construction companies erecting new buildings: 40 percent of site workers should reside within the district; 40 percent should be residents of Greater Cincinnati outside the district; and 20 percent of labor and trade should be comprised of minorities and women.

Since that meeting, all has been quiet on the NAACP/CPS front. But the CPS board was not the first and probably will not be the last Goliath Smitherman puts squarely in his slingshot sites.

Playing David is, after all, his specialty.

EXPLANATION NO. 2: ***An intelligent, confident, and outspoken black man is often considered a "smart-mouthed little punk."***

Smitherman entered council in the 2003 election with the will to change some of Cincinnati's ills; he says he understood how politics worked and was not idealistic about how to get things done. He honestly thought he could help remove the pall hanging over race relations in the city if we first did some serious reconciliatory work.

"I don't think I had this misconception that I was gonna change the world," Smitherman told me when we met in the Peebles Corner office of his advising firm, "but I thought people were more ethical and more moral than I found them to be when I entered City Council." Because of those assumptions, it's easy to see why, in hindsight, Smitherman would think his original campaign platform could be enacted.

"The first thing out of his mouth was 'racial reconciliation,'" says then–Charter Committee President Michael Goldman of his initial meeting with the would-be candidate. "Two thousand two and 2003 were very tense after the riots, racial unrest, and the death of Timothy Thomas, and Christopher Smitherman was all for racial reconciliation." Marion Spencer, former NAACP president and a former city councilmember, was among those who suggested Smitherman to Goldman, even as then–council members and Democrats David Pepper and John Cranley were trying to lure him to their party. "He was very articulate, *very* well spoken, [and] he had already put together the beginning of a campaign [team]," Goldman recalls. Another plus: Smitherman was in favor of overturning Article XII, the 1993 charter amendment prohibiting city officials from passing laws including sexual orientation as a protected class. "To have an African-American male in favor of defeating it was big," he says.

Goldman, who acted as Smitherman's senior campaign advisor, characterizes his win in 2003 as "probably the most exciting campaign I've ever been on." And when Smitherman lost his reelection bid in 2005?

"It was mixed emotions," Goldman says.

To understand how someone could start his city council career with such promise only to squash it so quickly, you have to go back to that dark post-riot period, when Charlie Luken was the "strong" mayor and many citizens were hoping, earnestly, that a new, diverse crew of council members signaled the dawn of a less fractured era.

Let's go to the clips: Headlines in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* trumpeted Smitherman's win as giving Charterites "new oomph," and heralded him as "blunt, bold, and ambitious." But in short order, Smitherman alienated his colleagues, confused his party, and pissed off certain factions in the city while his black supporters praised him, defended his outspokenness, and lamented the double standard inherent in a black politician fighting for the fair treatment of black people.

During a December 2003 meeting with Police Chief Thomas Streicher, Smitherman, annoyed by what he perceived as stonewalling when updates on high-profile cases were not forthcoming, blasted Streicher, telling him he wouldn't tolerate "insubordination." But what really got tongues wagging was when Smitherman told Streicher who was boss.

As Smitherman recalls the confrontation, he says he was nervous. It was a tense scene: present in council chambers was the family of Nathaniel Jones, a black man who'd died in police custody in a White Castle parking lot the night before Smitherman's swearing-in ceremony.

"To see them emotionally torn apart was devastating to me," Smitherman says. "I watched the operation—from the chief, to the mayor, to Mike Allen—go into defensive mode and dehumanize this man. I was clearly concerned about having just been elected and now inheriting the worst-case scenario—an in-custody death. And the African-American community looking at me and looking at council, saying, 'Are you gonna carry this burden? Are you going to be a different *kind* of elected official?' I felt all of that in the room.

"I tapped my little red button and the mayor looked over. I'm sure he's thinking, we've got a freshman council member that's gonna ask some questions. And I said: 'Let me be clear: Chief Streicher, you don't control this city. I'm your boss and I'm not going to tolerate insubordination

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from you and I have some questions that I need you to answer.' That was my first day on council."

By uttering those words, Goldman says, Smitherman exhibited a fundamental lack of understanding of the City Charter. "We are a council management form of government," Goldman points out. "The [city] manager is the CEO of our city."

Smitherman says black citizens immediately felt "representation" by his line of questioning. But it came at great cost to him. "I burnt political capital to ask those questions," he says, "[but] people felt like they had been heard."

By mid-January 2004, Smitherman was drowning then—City Manager Valerie Lemmie's office in requests: autopsy reports on Jones; police-custody deaths during Streicher's tenure; lawsuit settlement figures for the previous decade. But it was his demand for, of all things, a list of high schools attended by police academy grads that put him square in the city's racial ring. Many—including then–Hamilton County Prosecutor Mike Allen, an Elder grad and former cop—thought Smitherman was drawing a direct correlation between cops who'd graduated from certain west side high schools and the department's inability to successfully train those officers in how to police poor, black neighborhoods. (He wasn't completely off the mark. Of the top three high schools, Elder graduated 76 officers; Western Hills 69; and Oak Hills 46.)

"Whether he meant it or not," says John Cranley, who was on council at the time, "he gave the impression that he thought the police was the enemy. That was a *huge* disconnect for him and the electorate."

And not just the electorate. Allen called Smitherman a "smart-mouthed little punk" on Bill Cunningham's afternoon gabfest on WLW radio for the graduation list request and his "disrespect" of Streicher. "In hindsight, it was very silly," says Allen, now a defense attorney.

"It hurts to say now," he adds, pausing. "I called Christopher Smitherman a 'smart-mouthed little punk' and it was stupid for an elected official to call another elected official. I regret saying it. To Christopher Smitherman's credit, he never responded."

But Smitherman didn't stop pushing, demanding—among other things—an audit of police overtime records to ferret out possible abuse and overpayment. "I think he has the potential to be a crusader, but he's been more of an agitator," says Cranley. As he sees it, Smitherman came onto council with the wrong perceptions of how it had been handling the city's racial problems. In early 2001, council had passed an anti-racial profiling ordinance; by that summer, it had narrowly voted to proceed with the Collaborative Agreement that would eventually transform the city's policing policies. "When he first got on, he gave a vibe that we didn't care about the issues that came up in 2001 and that we hadn't done anything about it," he adds. "There was nothing in his background that would lead me to believe he was going to be this Stokely Carmichael. [But] he had a very divisive base and became very divisive very quickly."

However, Cranley also experienced firsthand how Smitherman's approach was viewed in the black community. "I was at Redfish [Seafood Grill] and in the men's room was what I took to be a dishwasher," Cranley says. "He was probably 18 or 19, and he recognized me and he said, 'That Smitherman is the greatest thing to happen to this city.' And I remember thinking, 'Holy Cow!'"

By the next election, the damage to his political aspirations and public persona was done. According to an *Enquirer* analysis, in 2005 Smitherman lost the central and east side precincts—Mt. Lookout, Hyde Park, Mt. Washington, Clifton, and Mt. Adams/Walnut Hills—that had helped put him in office in 2003. "Some precincts in North Avondale—his own neighborhood and a Charterite stronghold—also turned on him," the article stated.

Too bad voters aren't ones for nuance. "Christopher was right on the issues he was looking at but the disappointment, the frustration, was in the way he was communicating it," says Goldman, who adds that he tried talking to Smitherman back then, but "he was self-defeating. Politics is compromise. Not only did he not make friends on council, but he didn't make friends with voters and they didn't reward him."

BUT SMITHERMAN has found another way to impact other issues decided on by voters: ballot initiatives. And he's done so under the auspices of the NAACP and with one eyebrow-raising political bedfellow. In March 2009, Smitherman appointed Christopher Finney, a white conservative Hyde Park attorney and the cofounder of the Coalition Opposed to Additional Spending and Taxes (COAST), to NAACP's "chair of legal redress." Smitherman sees it as a way to hook ballot issues affecting black neighborhoods to COAST's anti-tax wagon—a move he calls "a more sophisticated arena of economics and politics...to move beyond identity politics."

Together, the groups have so far cosponsored and co-authored five initiatives. They've won battles to defeat the county jail tax, to stop red-light cameras, and to allow voters to ratify the sale of Greater Cincinnati Water Works; but they lost a bid to institute proportional representation on city council and failed to pass Issue 9, the anti-street car/passenger rail initiative. Like Smitherman, Finney wears his "outsider" status as a badge and shares his frustration over "getting new ideas heard."

"They'll attack you, and when I say 'they,' I mean the corporate community, the media, the nonprofit community," Finney says. "It's easy for them to turn us into caricatures, to further marginalize us." Finney calls Smitherman "a transcendent man" and marvels at his ability to sidestep assumptions of race and class to form "common sense" answers. "When Chris and I come together he keeps telling me, 'The African-American community is very conservative,' " Finney says. "What Christopher Smitherman has done is he's said let's put some of these ideas in action. He's challenging conservatives to do the same—to come at these issues with com-

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mon sense. Everybody would be better off being more open to power."

Many members of the city's chattering class (Democrats, Republicans, and Charterites alike) scratch their heads—or just rip their hair out—over the Smitherman-Finney axis, but Smitherman is unflinching when it comes to flexing whatever power—perceived or actual—he has accumulated. Proof: He's working with the NAACP on another ballot initiative for November that, if passed, will give voters the power to recall the mayor.

"The purpose of this is…we don't have a provision to terminate the mayor," Smitherman tells me. He insists it's about good government, *not* about mucking up the works and keeping his name in the paper. He insists that it's not targeted at Mark Mallory. But observers could be forgiven for coming to that conclusion, given that last year the NAACP cast a "no confidence" vote against the mayor.

I failed to get an interview with Mallory on the topic of Smitherman. "I don't think the mayor wants to be quoted," Jason Barron, the mayor's media contact, told me. Any discussion of Smitherman was, Barron said, "a controversy waiting to happen."

I spoke with another mayoral staffer, expressing Smitherman's assertion that the initiative to give the city a mayoral recall option wasn't a personal jab at Mallory. "Then why do it while he's in office?" the staffer asked. "You know how that's going to look? C'mon, now."

How it looks to a lot of people is that Smitherman is laying the groundwork to one day (soon) present himself as a viable black candidate once again, perhaps to run for mayor or county commissioner.

"I wouldn't run for county commissioner," Smitherman says without hesitation. "If I were to run for anything, it would be for city council, it would be for mayor of the city of Cincinnati. I love Cincinnati."

EXPLANATION NO. 3: ***Christopher Smitherman is a demigod to some blacks for the same reasons he annoys some whites.***

"I think there's a misperception about Christopher," says Hamilton County Municipal Court Judge and NAACP lifetime member Tyrone Yates, who Smitherman once listed as a hero. "Christopher is a very mainstream American and he is an advocate and a voice for racial equality and racial reconciliation. He believes not only in minority participation, but minority participation on equal terms, which is the contract of our country."

Yates thinks what people overlook in criticizing Smitherman is his drive, determination, and quest for social justice. "Christopher is remarkably focused," he says. "He certainly has made a powerful impact on the city. As president of the NAACP, he wants the organization to be treated with regard and respect. I think that really is the key to Christopher." Then, a Smitherman-like warning. "Those organizations who want to marginalize Christopher Smitherman or the NAACP—particularly on issues of equality and justice—will find it a hard row to hoe."

Al "Bug" Williams, a barber, NAACP member, and self-described "guy Friday" to Smitherman, sees him as a voice for disenfranchised people. "Most of the politicians I've met have been very phony and haven't kept their word," Williams says. Smitherman, on the other hand, "opened up the door to truth and was real with constituents. Some people may not like it. It's like putting the light on roaches. When he stepped on council, he was the light and they all ran."

Williams sees him as a fundamentally different kind of black leader. "He's comfortable being around regular guys," he says. "Plus, he isn't afraid to express himself in politics, which is rare for a black man. Plus, he is a successful businessman. I wondered: Why does he even have to bother with *us*?"

Apparently, it's Smitherman's pleasure.

He's found his footing with the NAACP—boosting membership from 500 to roughly 3,000, surpassing Akron and Cleveland. He's helped erase the chapter's debt, hosted three successful Freedom Fund Dinners, the group's only fundraiser, and increased attendance from 500 to 1,100. He has helped collect more than 100,000 signatures for those ballot initiatives and he's proud the NAACP put its imprimatur on them.

Then, there's that convention. Smitherman redeemed himself—that is, if you're one of those who thought he'd fallen—with the 99th Annual NAACP Convention in the summer of 2008, which he worked tirelessly to bring to the city. Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, then campaigning for president, both spoke. And local media took particular note when Smitherman, once the pebble in the Cincinnati Police Department's collective shoe, led a standing ovation before the convention's sold-out audience to thank the groups who'd made the event a success. He knew he couldn't have pulled it off without the help of the police. Smitherman the agitator, at least for a few hot August days in 2008, was gone.

"That was a huge turning point for Smitherman," says Cranley. "It did a lot of good for him when he was publicly gracious to the police."

Then Cranley crystallizes what's kept Smitherman an outlier. "He's done a great job in the last three or four years being *against* things," Cranley says. "In the long run he's gotta find out how to build a beautiful city as opposed to tear down what he doesn't like. In the long run, he has to rehabilitate himself with the white community. He can't have the polarizing effect he had when he was on council."

Smitherman, of course, doesn't see himself as a human bulldozer. He's reflective, and knows full well that the public persona he's displayed has quite often been confrontational, unconventional, even punitive.

"I hope it doesn't come out at the end of my life—as I look at leaving my mark on the tree—that my directness ends up being a weakness," he says, sometimes stammering to find the words. "So I attempt to be thoughtful but be honest as I see this game."

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continued from page 75

of The International Institute of Not Doing Much, an Oakland, California–based organization that promotes slowing down.

Richards, who ghostwrites for business clients and is the author of several children's books, says the art of conversation has definitely fallen out of favor in search of more efficient, less meaningful ways of communicating. "Everything that I'm interested in has to do with time poverty," he tells me. "We may be the one of the richest nations in the world, but we're poor in time for one another."

Born and raised in England, Richards came to the United States in the 1970s and says he was immediately struck by how busy everyone was. "In the '60s, we thought that technology was going to save us time," he says. "We do have the gadgets to save us time, but we don't have the smarts to do anything but work to buy more gadgets."

He's right. I don't need gadgets. I don't need the Internet. I need yoga and heart-to-heart chats. I need to sit on my porch and feel the breeze on my face, to take walks and know the warmth of the sun on my back. *That's* what I need.

I AM CRANKY. *Extremely* cranky. It's only been a day since my conversation with Richards, and the rosy glow of my low-tech Zen is gone. What if I have an important e-mail, one that needs my immediate attention? Or a vital message on my cell? If only I could know that I wasn't missing anything major, I'd feel better. Yes, that would make things easier. This is where the little devil on my shoulder gets the best of me: *You could just log in to your e-mail account and* look *at your messages. Just look. Don't* answer *them. That would be cheating.*

My fingers twitch. I feel my resolve weakening. The voice in my head needles me a bit more. *Like in relationships, looking isn't actually cheating. Right?* That's right, looking *isn't* cheating. Yes, I'm just going to *look* at my e-mails, not answer them.

I log in. At this point, four days into my experiment, there are 83 new messages in my inbox. I peruse the subject lines and am relieved that I haven't missed any big news. So far, nothing has gone horribly wrong. Nothing is falling apart without me. The anal-retentive in me wants to delete them all because I hate unread messages in my inbox, but that's a battle for another day.

You may be wondering why I don't just flop in front of the television for a marathon of (what passes for) network entertainment. Because, long before this project, the availability of shows and movies online convinced me I didn't really *need* the tube any longer. So I didn't bother getting a digital converter box last year. The upshot: I no longer have access even to the network channels. My spirits soar when a package from my mother arrives at the office. She's rooting me on from afar by sending me two VHS tapes: *L.A. Confidential* and *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka.* Yes! Now all I have to do is find a VCR. I send a desperate message to my co-workers that begins: "I haven't watched television since Saturday and my life simply isn't interesting enough to forgo TV...."

The assistant art director hooks me up with her Daewoo, and after work I head over to the main branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The woman at the information desk looks at me quizzically when I ask if they still have VHS tapes. She walks over and points to a wall of tapes near the checkout area on the first floor. There are rows and rows of CDs and DVDs for as far as the eye can see, but the VHS tapes only take up a space that's about the length of two picnic tables. That's it. It's a jumble that's no longer worthy of categorization by interest (romance, action, etc.); everything's in alphabetical order, which requires more searching than I'm willing to do. I snatch up *Thirteen Conversations About One Thing, Vertigo,* and *Sliding Doors,* and hit the exit. Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

When I get home, I scrounge around in my closets for any VHS tapes that I still might be hanging onto for nothing more than sentimental value. I find a 30-minute reality show-esque documentary from 1999, recounting life during my final year at my alma mater, Central Michigan University. It's a grainy mess that includes interviews with my friends, some of whom I haven't talked to since it was made. The tape ends with me dancing around to Prince's "1999" after exclaiming that I've gotten a job offer from *The Post-Journal* in Jamestown, New York.

Strangely, I'm comforted by this. The tape is delightfully nostalgic, a reminder of how far I've come in life and my horrible taste in clothing. I see the clunky brown phone on my dorm wall, and it brings me back to the present. That was long before universities started charging for landlines. What items we consider vital parts of living now will be deemed obsolete in 11 years?

THURSDAY ROLLS BY uneventfully, but come Friday the tension has become unbearable: I'm ready to throw in the towel. I need to double my efforts to see this thing through. I talk to my friend Jenny, who has some experience with low-tech living. According to her, my experiment is how she lives all of the time. She doesn't have cable and she's never owned a cell phone. Jenny's like me in that she doesn't salivate over technological advances just because everyone else does. She's a professor and is tethered to her computer enough during the day. "Everyone kept saying, 'You have to have a cell phone!' " she recalls. "Actually, I don't. Now I won't get one for philosophical reasons."

We decide to head over to Newport on the Levee to catch a showing of *Hot Tub Time Machine,* in which John Cusack and some buddies travel back in

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time to 1986; it seems an appropriate choice, given the situation at hand. But the screens are down because something tripped the fire alarms and—although there's no actual fire—the staff can't start the projectors again until the fire marshal gets there. Damn technology. What good is it if it doesn't work when you want it to? After getting a refund, we sit outside on the concourse, watching a magic show across from Cold Stone Creamery and chatting like teenagers. In a way, it's freeing.

My feel-good face-to-facing continues on Saturday when I head up to Oxford to celebrate with my friend Obie, who's heading off to China soon. We have dinner at Wild Bistro and pop over to Tonic for drinks, where he begins to tell me about his internship and all of the stuff he needs to finish before he leaves town. I'm listening to him, but I'm not fully listening.

"Hey, what time is it?" I ask with a practiced nonchalance and he rolls his eyes. I guess I need to practice some more. He knows exactly why I want to know. I'm asking for the time every 10 minutes. The closer it gets to this week officially being over, the more antsy I get. I think of leaving early so that I can be at home when the clock strikes midnight, but I shake that thought off. It isn't fair to Obie.

On the other hand, he's not fully listening to me either; every few minutes, he looks at his phone—searching apps, reading e-mail, checking Facebook status updates. There was a day and age when this would've been considered rude, but it appears that time has passed. I'm not offended. I'm too busy thinking about what might have happened on the episode of *Bleach* I missed earlier in the week.

On my way home, I'm pulled over by a Butler County Sheriff's deputy for speeding. As much as I don't want to admit it, I was going a little faster than usual, giddy at the thought of getting home to check my e-mail. The misstep costs me $168. No matter. By 1 a.m., I'm on my computer, responding to or simply deleting the 250 e-mails I've racked up, watching the shows in my Hulu queue, and reading the latest chapter of *Naruto*, my current favorite Japanese comic book. I go to bed just as the birds outside my window start their early-morning chirping.

IN THE WEEKS after my great experiment, I turn in my resignation for one of the boards on which I sit. It's one step in the direction of lessening the number of organizations, events, and obligations that suck up my free time. I start to make more of a conscious effort to limit the number of times I check my e-mail each day. I don't post on Facebook or Twitter for a few days; as it turns out, no one misses me. And that's OK.

I know the difference between real friends and Facebook friends, and it's silly to be disgruntled about the methods I use to relate to people, but this assignment has brought me face to face with the fact that sometimes I'm busy for the sake of being busy. Technology, in most cases, is the impetus for this. I'm always planning programs, coordinating fundraisers, promoting events, all things that I'm not obligated to do. I often spend too much time grousing about these activities, which makes them more of a chore than they probably should be.

My mind runs constantly with thoughts of what I could or should be doing when I'm sitting still. But sitting still should be enough, shouldn't it? Shouldn't lives lived offline be more fulfilling than those parsed for publication? We all have an intrinsic need to connect with one another, despite all of the walls that we build around ourselves. We crave the attention/support/approval that others have to offer, even though we seem to do everything possible to distract ourselves from fully engaging with the rest of humanity.

Well, no more! I hereby declare that henceforth I will put into the universe only that which I want to get back—and that isn't spam or apocalyptic computer viruses. From here on out, I will live life to the fullest with or without technology!

Right after I send this e-mail.

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Dine

(where to eat now)

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN KURTZ

▲ Cheesecake topped with fresh fruit, from Brown Dog Café in Blue Ash.

Dining Out
Begging for more at Brown Dog Café in Blue Ash
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Fine Diving
Lose yourself in home cooking at Ft. Wright Family Restaurant
PAGE 145

Another Bite
My first taste of fast food royalty: McDonald's Big Mac
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▲ Clockwise from above: Chef/owner Shawn McCoy; the chocolate tasting dessert; crispy duck with braised bok choy; and the spinach salad.

Interior Monologue

IF BROWN DOG CAFÉ'S DECOR MATCHED ITS FOOD, THIS BLUE ASH SPOT MIGHT START HOPPING.

BY DONNA COVRETT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN KURTZ

» In this Age of Buzz and dwin-dling marketing budgets, most restaurants are enthused about an unsolicited article. Not Chef Shawn McCoy. When our photographer contacted him to make a date for shooting the photos that accompany this article, McCoy fired off a sarcastic e-mail to me: "What were you thinking? We have slipped into blissful obscurity and only had to worry about staying afloat in troubled times." Actually, I was thinking just that, blissfulness notwithstanding.

After making several consecutive appearances on this magazine's Best Restaurants list—from 2003 through 2007, when the story was framed as a Top 25 list; the restaurant never quite made the leap when the format was whittled down to the Top 10—Brown Dog Café became a restaurant I dined at once a year. Quietly tucked into a strip mall on Pfeiffer Road near I-71, it's under most diners' radars, especially those living outside of Blue Ash. And even that's not a guarantee. "People who live behind me don't even know I'm here," McCoy told me in a follow-up phone conversation, only half jokingly. It took a friend of mine coming down from a Restaurant Week high to reactivate my interest. She—a Twittering, hipsterish sort, a curious and adventurous eater who never-

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theless makes most of her dining choices by following the buzz—had never made the trek from her urban neighborhood to Brown Dog Café. Restaurant Week was a perfect catalyst. Occurring twice a year, it is designed for people like her: a fixed price, multi-course offering (usually three) that showcases the chef and inspires diners to try new places. Indeed, McCoy says they end up being his two busiest weeks of the year, with about a third of the business attributed to first-time customers. After dining at Brown Dog during the autumn run of Restaurant Week, my friend sent me this text: Brown Dog Café: *Food :-) Service :-) Ambience :-(. Delish, but atmosphere needs Prozac bump.*

I'M NOT FAZED by the location. Several of my favorite restaurants are in suburban strip malls, and I will gladly make the march for the memorable food or experience (or both) they serve. In most, the physical space reinforces the food. Both Taqueria Mercado (Fairfield) and Sichuan Bistro (Mason) are animated and rollicking, with mismatched furniture and walls awash in bright colors. There's a genteel elegance to Hugo (Oakley), and a contemporary bistro atmosphere to Rue Dumaine (Dayton) that seems to rise above the location. But at the 12-year-old Brown Dog Café, there is an ambient disconnect from the experience of the food. This is what my friend was responding to, and it may be what relegates Brown Dog to "blissful obscurity" while its buzz-savvy peers remain more top of mind. But first, the food. Because after eight years of McCoy banging out some pretty remarkable fare, if you haven't had a plate of Shawn McCoy's design set in front of you, it's about time.

McCoy and his sous chef Jerade Hill are talented cooks with a flair for producing menus with, for the most part, excellent, flavorful food and attractive, colorful presentations that are camera phone–worthy. In a main course of crispy duck, a shower of delicate micro greens contrasts with the bronzed, parchment-crisp skin of a pan fried duck breast (coated in a blend of roasted cinnamon, Szechuan peppercorns, star anise, cloves, and fennel to replicate Chinese five spice), while underneath three golden snowflake-like slices of lotus root fan out alongside three dollar-sized pools of a raspberry barbecue sauce the color of opulent rubies. Tiny white crab mushrooms peek out from underneath a layer of emerald braised baby bok choy, which in turn is draped over a modest bank of miso infused brown rice. It's beautiful and inviting, and every bit as delectable as it looks.

Like the crispy duck, many of the other dishes show the chef's knack for the plate as a palette. A trio of stout day boat diver scallops—exquisitely golden from pan searing—perch atop individual beds of uniformly diced butternut squash, fragments of boar bacon, and shavings of Brussels sprout. The natural sweetness of the squash, which is roasted in browned butter and garlic, with a suggestion of toasted caraway, reverberates off of the nutty bitterness of the sprouts. Together they are both a foil to the soft melting texture of the scallops.

There is as much to enjoy in the wild boar tenderloin rubbed in espresso powder (cut with paprika and several other spices, it's not as latte-heavy as the Seattle archetype); the wild hog meat seared, sliced, and fanned out over rich, soft polenta and wilted greens, accompanied by a luxuriously smoky-sweet pool of fig and bourbon reduction. Called "pig and fig"

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▼ The somber hues in the Brown Dog Café dining room belie the friendly service and ambitious menu.

on the menu, the dish is hearty without being heavy, green and earth hitting the palate in addition to the char and caramel, and all without being overly frenetic. And, when it's this good, a strong case for eating more polenta. It's dishes such as this that Brown Dog's clientele ("mostly older and well-to-do; the dinner crowd" according to McCoy) insist remain on the otherwise largely seasonal menu.

There's a wonderful spinach salad that falls under that category as well, a kaleidoscope of green avocado, cherry tomatoes, shards of bacon, crumbles of Gorgonzola, and hard-boiled egg, and a signature dessert of chocolate banana bread with coconut praline, caramelized bananas, and house made vanilla bean ice cream that simultaneously exemplifies all that's good and evil in the world.

Unfortunately, there are dishes that balance out all this fabulousness by underwhelming: A pork belly appetizer with (yet again) wilted greens and polenta whose braised texture and fattiness (lacking the top layer of crackling crunch) was too similar in quality to the rich polenta; subsequently it all meshed together in the mouth. A charcuterie whose duck confit, corned duck breast, and torchon of foie gras were much less interesting than the companions of terrific turnip horseradish, pickled red onions, and green tomato apple chutney. And the ale steamed mussels, whose Sierra Nevada ale broth was so bitter that we returned it to the kitchen after one bite (it was removed from our check and explained as an anomaly—a bad batch of ale).

In spite of a few blunders, these are dishes that are ambitious in design and execution. The eye for detail and contrasts of colors and textures belongs to someone who cares for food. So why doesn't the same sense of care seem to get translated to the dining room? For me it begins with the exterior. The café's single window is covered by a long heavy drape—usually a bit haphazard, as if it was shut quickly—that not only casts a somber pallor over the black, burgundy, and yellow interior, but looks unwelcoming from the outside, as if it's staffed by the type of people who live in basements and have no social skills. It's not, of course: The service is polite, friendly, and familial. They are clearly proud of their chef's food. But it lends the restaurant a dodgy look, a barrier of sorts that seems unwelcoming. There is also a carelessness and shabbiness to some of the accessories: lamp cords running across the floor near the entrance, HomeGoods–style art and tchotkes seemingly stuck on the walls without much thought given to proportion or coordination. (Why place a nondescript print practically near the ceiling, way above eye level?)

If this sounds petty, it's not meant to be. It's meant to show the disconnect, and why on several weeknights, we were one of two or three tables. The problem is not the food. Throw open the curtains and shed some light on your restaurant. By being welcoming, you're inviting diners to the party. And building your buzz.

Brown Dog Café
5893 Pfeiffer Rd., Blue Ash
(513) 794-1610

Hours
Lunch Mon–Fri 11 am-2 pm, dinner Mon–Thurs 5–9 pm, Fri & Sat 5–10 pm

Atmosphere
A hidden gem for food, but the dining room needs an antidepressant.

Prices
First courses, $6–$12; entrées $16–$26

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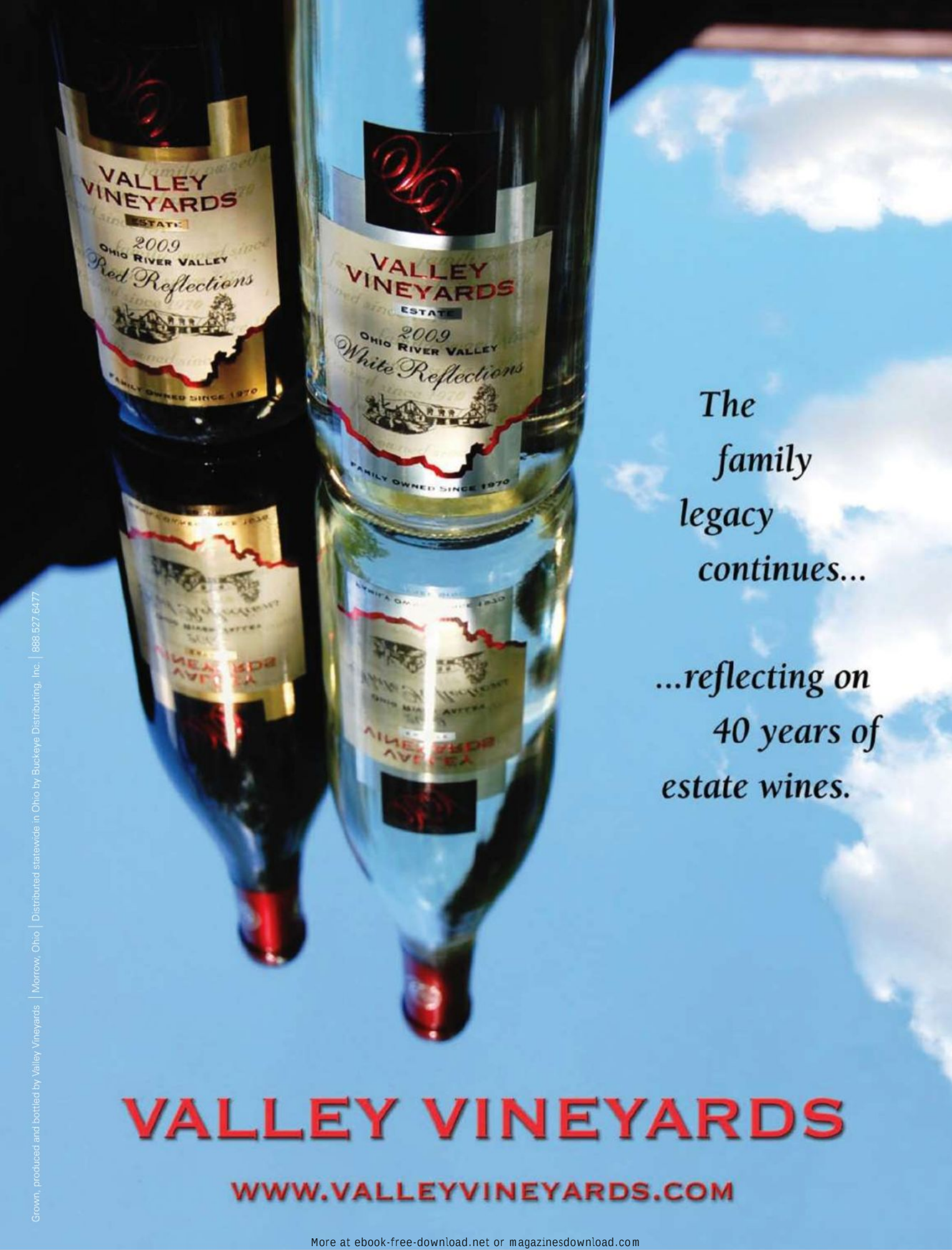

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Dining Editor DONNA COVRETT

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$ = Under $15
$$ = Mostly under $30
$$$ = Mostly under $49
$$$$ = $50 and up

AMERICAN

BLUE JAY RESTAURANT

This is where Northsiders hang out for breakfast and lunch. They're here for the comfort food: omelettes and big plates of French toast, double-deckers and shrimp baskets, pies (regular and cream). The quirky specialty of the house is a double-decker sandwich made of bacon and hard-boiled eggs. It's a potential protein coma. Remember open-faced roast beef sandwiches and mashed potatoes suffocating in hot gravy? They live here. Of course, most of the neighborhood's vegan population is appalled. The real irony is that the seats are vintage green Naugahyde and the vegans are wearing real leather. Go figure. » *4154 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 541-0847. Breakfast and lunch Mon–Sat. MC, V.* **$**

CABANA ON THE RIVER

Like a big outdoor picnic with a view of the serene hills of Kentucky and the Ohio River rolling by, this is one of those places west-siders would rather the rest of Cincinnati didn't know about. Its annual debut in late spring marks the official beginning of summer for many. People flock to the Cabana for good food prepared well: grilled mahi-mahi sandwiches, pork barbecue, steak on a stick, Angus beef burgers, Italian and steak hoagies, white chicken chili, and interesting salads. While some of the fare is familiar pub grub, nothing is sub-standard. Even potato chips are made in-house and seasoned with Cajun spices. » *7445 Forbes Rd., Sayler Park, (513) 941-7442. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* **$**

EMBERS

The menu here is built for celebration: poshly priced steak and sushi selections are meant to suit every special occasion that might occur in the first-class neighborhoods and shopping mecca surrounding this restaurant, from rehearsal dinners to corporate events to multi-generational family gatherings and intimate anniversaries. Appetizers are both classic (shrimp cocktail) and Asian-inspired (beef satay); fashionable ingredients are name-checked (micro-greens and black truffles); a prominent sushi section (nigiri, sashimi, and rolls) precedes a list of archetypal salads; beer-sodden American Wagyu beef sidles up to steaks of corn-fed prime; home-style non-steak entrées (chicken pot pie) meet high-style selections (seared scallops with wild mushroom risotto and pea tendril salad). Talk about a party. » *8170 Montgomery Rd., Madeira, (513) 984-8090, www.embersrestaurant.com. Dinner seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$$**

MR. GENE'S DOGHOUSE

Cumminsville is home to arguably the best hot chili cheese mett and chocolate malt in Greater Cincinnati. A family owned business that began as a simple hot dog stand 46 years ago, Mr. Gene's still attracts lines of loyal customers at its windows. Can't stand the heat? Order the mild chili mett—more flavor, fewer BTUs. And try the Chicago-style hot dog with pickles, onions, relish, mustard, tomato, and celery salt; a barbecue sandwich; or wings (a sign proclaims "So hot they make the devil sweat"). Although the chocolate malt is the biggest seller, we love the $2.59 pineapple shake, made with real pineapple. » *3703 Beekman St., South Cumminsville, (513) 541-7636. Open Feb–Dec for lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MC, V.* **$**

LOCAL 127

As the name suggests, nearly two dozen local vendors, farmers, and artisans contribute to Chef Steven Geddes's haute grandmother cuisine. Geddes is both a chef and master sommelier; order the chef's sampler to fully appreciate several of his house-cured treats: smoked golden trout blended with waxed beans; pears with salted duck breast or smoked chicken; a pork belly confit good enough to eat with a spoon. Though Local 127 occasionally oversells the farm-to-table concept, the enthusiastic staff ply diners with elegantly rendered Sunday suppers. When is the last time you ate breaded and fried pork cutlet in a room with a chandelier? But there it is, crowned with shreds of fried shallots, sandwiched between cheesy grits and charred green cabbage. And don't forget the double chicken whammy of a succulent fried breast over confit, or the cured pork over a hill of white beans and sautéed greens. » *127 W. Fourth St., downtown, (513) 721-1345. Lunch Tues–Fri, dinner Tues–Sat. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$**

ORCHIDS AT PALM COURT

Chef Todd Kelly's impressive menu depends on some fine ingredients, but his ability to transform common ingredients makes nearly everything that comes out of the kitchen flawless. Both seasonal preparations of rib eye—one with curly spinach, oxtail, and black truffle gnocchi; the other with marrow persillade (equal amounts of minced garlic and parsley), chanterelles, and truffled mac-and-cheese—are stunning. Pastry Chef Kat Kessler provides the exclamation point, creating visually appealing desserts that don't sacrifice flavor: a bowl of warm bittersweet chocolate sauce supports a square pillow of caramelized marshmallow, scoop of cinnamon ice cream, and crisp almond tuile spoon. Even this gilded splendor of a room feels comfortable. In part, that's due to a superb service staff that is attentive without fawning, knowledgeable without preening. » *35 W. Fifth St., downtown, (513) 421-9100. Dinner seven days. MCC, DS, DC.* **$$$**

THE PALACE

With Executive Chef Jose Salazar at the helm, the menu here has been invigorated with plenty of approachable dishes that are at once rustic and elegant. Farm greens abound—with goat cheese, roasted beets, and the sweet-tart pop of rosy red poached quince; with orange confit, shaved fennel, and Pecorino Romano—as do simply luxurious soups like the earthy, sensual mushroom. There's plenty of steak love: filet, hangar, and a top-notch sirloin. The $44 three-course prix fixe dinner menu is also a hit. And every day is a beautiful day in Pastry Chef Summer Genetti's dessert divahood, with a roster of sweets that range from adorable (malted chocolate three ways) to classic (pistachio financier) to inspiring (pineapple buttermilk sherbet and chorizo confit with chocolate flourless). » *601 Vine St., downtown, (513) 381-3000. Breakfast seven days, lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Mon–Sat. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$$**

[BITES]

TASTY RADIO

» Can't get enough food talk? Tune in to The 55KRC Morning Show With Brian Thomas every Friday morning at 8:50 to hear Donna Covrett discuss the latest food and restaurant news.

PUTZ'S CREAMY WHIP

When your tongue touches the frozen white Nirvana on top of a Putz's cone, every moment of every joy of every summer of your life is condensed into one simple swipe. It's the sweetness, the creaminess, the cloud-like texture. I dare you to close your eyes, taste it, and not think of your first summer love, or getting invited to the new neighbor's pool on the second day of August, or visiting Rock City and swearing on a stack of MoonPie wrappers that you can see all seven states. Putz's coneys are also very popular. But it's the simplicity of vanilla on a cone that has made this place. When I-74 was being built, the expressway would have landed three feet from Putz's back door. As bizarre as this sounds, the U.S. Department of Transportation actually moved the freeway for Putz's. They do that kind of thing for holy shrines. » *Putz Place and West Fork Rd., Westwood, (513) 681-8668. Lunch and dinner seven days, seasonally. Cash.* **$**

RON'S ROOST

They stake their reputation on their fried chicken, serving 10,000 pieces weekly. It takes a few

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minutes, since each batch is made to order. Even the consummate rotund weather guy, Al Roker (before the gastric bypass), said grace here over a three-piece basket. Ron's also serves chicken 18 other ways, including Buffalo chicken spring rolls and chicken livers in gravy. It's all about the chicken here, but that's not all they have. The menu is five solid pages of stuff good enough to be called specialties: Oktoberfest sauerbraten, Black Angus cheeseburgers, fried whitefish on rye, hot bacon slaw, lemon meringue pie (homemade, of course), and the best Saratoga chips this side of Saratoga. » *3853 Race Rd., Bridgetown, (513) 574-0222. Breakfast Sun, lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* **$**

SYMPHONY HOTEL

Tucked into a West 14th Street Italianate directly around the corner from Music Hall, this place feels like a private dinner club. There's a by-reservation-only policy, and when you call, you'll be prompted to check the web site for the weekend's five-course menu. Chef David Buchman calls his style of cooking "light French," and you can taste it in the pea soup, a spring serenade punctuated with a crunch of dried wasabi peas. Salads were interesting without being busy, and the sorbets—served as the third course palate cleanser—were all made in-house. Main courses of asparagus sandwiched between salmon, and a filet mignon served with an ethereal version of whipped potatoes and cauliflower showed that the chef knows his strengths but, like a good composer, reveals himself to the diner differently each time. » *210 W. 14th St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 721-3353, www.symphonyhotel.com. Dinner Fri & Sat September through mid-July.* **$$$**

TRIO

Trio is nothing if not a crowd pleaser. Whether you're in the mood for a California-style pizza for 11 bucks or filet mignon (with side salad, garlic mashed potatoes, and seasonal veggies for $29.95), the menu is broad enough to offer something for everyone. It may lack a cohesive point of view, but with the number of regulars who come in seven nights a week, variety is Trio's ace in the hole. A simple Roma tomato pizza with basil, parmesan, and provolone delivered a fine balance of crunchy crust, sharp cheese, and sweet, roasted tomatoes. Paired with a glass of Laetitia pinot noir, it made a perfect light meal. The service is friendly enough for a casual neighborhood joint but comes with white tablecloth attentiveness and knowledge. Combine that with the consistency in the kitchen, and Trio is a safe bet. » *7565 Kenwood Rd., Kenwood, (513) 984-1905. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DC.* **$$**

BARBECUE

BOSTON BUTZ

This place serves the unlikely combination of pizza and pulled pork. And surprisingly they do both well. The pulled pork is smoky and tender, as pulled pork should be. The pizza is crispy and

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRONZE PHOTOGRAPHY

FINE DIVING

Lost in Ft. Wright

» **This is going to sound strange,** but if you could find the **Ft. Wright Family Restaurant,** it would be a great place to eat. But you can't. Sure, it's right off I-75, but it's hidden next to the chiropractor in the middle of a strip mall that's behind the credit union that's behind one of the gas stations. Even Google Maps gives you a "can't get there from here" alert. So forget even trying. But here's what you're missing: Everything's from scratch, except the pies. The double decker sandwiches will give you carpal tunnel just picking them up. There's homemade soup every day. Don't even ask what it is. It's just good. And then there's the heaping plate of fried chips (imagine that waffle fries and Saratoga chips had a baby). Breakfast is served all day, but I don't see why. The portions are so big you won't be hungry until tomorrow. Their motto is "a lot for a little" and they live up to that with huge portions and "did she forget to charge me for that?" prices. The servers here still understand that genuine smiles translate into tips. Most of them seem to have a psychology degree since they know everybody's problems and are always ready with a smile and some pie to make those problems a little more distant. I don't know how your problems could ever find you at this place though. It's a wonder that the regular customers know how to get back here. I think they just sleep in their cars in the lot. —J. KEVIN WOLFE

FT. WRIGHT FAMILY RESTAURANT, 1860 ASHWOOD CIRCLE, FT. WRIGHT, (859) 331-8359. PRICES: $4–$9. BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND DINNER SEVEN DAYS.

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zingy, as pizza should be. Most fans of Memphis-style barbecue will give the thumbs up to the sandwiches here. The Boston Butt is smoked for hours on end at a low temperature, keeping the meat perfectly tender. You just put on your choice of sauce and a little coleslaw to personalize your sandwich. And what's up with the pizza? The location was originally a pizza and creamy whip joint. So the pizza is not a sideline here. It's given the same attention it would get in a good pizzeria. The crust is thin and crispy with a nice layer of sauce and not too much cheese. » *3754 Hamilton-Cleves Rd., Ross Twp., (513) 738-3111. Lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* $

GOODIE'S BARBECUE RESTAURANT

The natural smoke flavor of the meat—rubbed with spices and slow cooked out back in the combo grill and smoker—married with Goodie's spicy sweet sauce, has engendered 20 years of loyal customers. Any real Southerner will tell you that ribs should never be tough or fall away from the bone. Chewy is the traditional texture of Southern-style ribs, and these ribs are Southern through and through. Expect traditional Southern sides, such as red beans and rice, potato salad, slaw, and exceptionally good fried okra. » *5841 Hamilton Ave., College Hill, (513) 542-4663. Lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* $$

KT'S BARBECUE & DELI

After 25 years in Hollywood, Kenny Tessel came home in 2004 to open a barbecue carryout and catering operation. Oh, how lucky we are. From a small, white building in Reading, Tessel coaxes flavors out of his Southern Pride smoker that will fill your mouth with shock and awe. We particularly recommend his boneless rib meat sandwich. The meat: tender and deep pink. The sandwich: jam-packed. The sauce: tangy, slightly hot, yet light. How good is it? "I got a customer who I think is on a fixed income," says Tessel, "because he told me he stopped smoking so that he can afford to buy my boneless rib meat." There can be no higher praise. » *8501 Reading Rd., Reading, (513) 761-0200. Lunch Tues–Fri, dinner Tues–Sun, carryout only. MC, V.* $

CHINESE

CHINESE IMPERIAL INN

The chilies-on-steroids cooking here will have you mopping beads of garlic-laced sweat from your brow. The musky, firecracker-red Mongolian chicken stabilizes somewhere just before nirvana exhaustion, and aggressively pungent shredded pork with dried bean curd leaves your eyes gloriously glistening from its spicy hot scarlet oil. Even an ice cold beer practically evaporates on your tongue. Do not fear: not all the dishes are incendiary. Try the seafood—lobster, razor clams, Dungeness and blue crabs, whelk, and oysters—prepared with tamer garlicky black bean sauce, or ginger and green onions. The Cantonese wonton soup, nearly as mild as your morning bowl of oatmeal, is as memorable as the feverish stuff. Sliced pork and shrimp are pushed into the steaming bowl of noodles and greens just before serving. Think comforting, grandmotherly tenderness. » *11042 Reading Rd., Sharonville, (513) 563-6788. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* $

[BITES]

MARKET WATCH

» Melt owner Lisa Kagen has taken over the former Hideaway space and opened Picnic & Pantry Micro Market and Specialty Foods. Check out the late night super fresh taco stand.

SICHUAN BISTRO CHINESE GOURMET

If your idea of Chinese food involves the usual suspects—i.e., crab-less Crab Rangoon and sugary-sauced meats combined with broccoli—by all means ask for the American menu. But the real story here is found in dishes of pungent multi-layered flavors that set your mouth ablaze with fermented peppers and fresh chilies and then just as quickly cool it down with the devilish, numbing sensation of hua jiao, Sichuan pepper. Its numbing effect is subtle at first: appetizers of cold sliced beef and tripe, as well as slices of pork belly with a profusion of minced garlic, lean toward the hot and sweet; mapo tofu freckled with tiny fermented black beans and scallions, and pork with pickled red peppers and strips of ginger root, progress from sweet to pungent to hot to salty—in that order. Alternated with cooling dishes—nibbles of rice, a verdant mound of baby bok choy steamed with a shovelful of garlic, refreshing spinach wilted in ginger sauce, a simply sensational tea-smoked duck—the effect is momentarily tempered. » *7888 S. Mason Montgomery Rd., Mason, (513) 770-3123. Lunch and dinner Tues–Sun. MC, V, DS.* $

ECLECTIC

CAFÉ DE PARIS

Specializing in soups, salads, and sandwiches for breakfast and lunch, this bright and sunny café is owned by Khaled Atallah, who makes everything to order from the small counter kitchen. Sandwiches are interesting and fresh on a baguette or croissant (try the Le Royale de Paris with melted Brie, turkey, onions, and sweet red peppers); salads are crisp with appropriately ripe vegetables (you'll never find a hard, orange slice of tomato). Grab a piece of homemade baklava and a wide cup of cappuccino (or a straight shot of some wicked-good espresso) and sit outside at the sidewalk table. » *17 Garfield Place, downtown, (513) 651-1919. Breakfast and lunch Mon–Fri. Cash.* $

HONEY

Honey is a great little neighborhood restaurant. The small sunlit room with pale walls and horticultural drawings seats approximately 40 diners around a small central bar that embodies the spirit of a Parisian bistro when it is full, which is almost always. With liberal portions and reasonable prices, chef Shoshannah Hafner (and her husband, co-owner Doug Hafner) has created an ambitious menu of American-continental comfort food specialties, to which she adds several nightly specials. Among the best is vegetarian goetta. Yes, vegetarian goetta. Try it. You won't believe how good it is. Moist herb-roasted chicken is served with peppered grits, creamed corn, and seasonal vegetables, while rosemary mashed potatoes heady with black pepper provide a luxurious touch to braised shortribs or Creole meatloaf with Tasso gravy. Share a side of the addictive hot fries and their chili-lime-honey dipping sauce. They'll draw you back, like, ahem, bees to Honey. » *4034 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 541-4300. Dinner Tues–Sat, brunch Sun. MCC.* $$

INDIGO CASUAL GOURMET CAFÉ

In the late '80s, when the food world began raving about California-style pizza, the folks behind Indigo trotted out their own gourmet pies. From the Maui, with its juicy pineapple slices, to the BBQ, with its huge chunks of boneless chicken, the pizzas are the menu's anchors. If you're looking for something not on a crust, try the Thai salad. Snappy and spicy with a traditional Thai peanut sauce, romaine lettuce, slices of chicken breast, and crunchy noodles, it was a welcome counterpoint to the pizza. » *2637 Erie Ave., Hyde Park, (513) 321-9952; 2053 Dixie Hwy., Ft. Mitchell, (859) 331-4339. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* $$

MELT

In this Northside sandwich joint, an assortment of colorful chalkboards show off the regular menu items and daily specials, but the restaurant's name pretty much dictates what you should get. Diners have their choice of 13 melted sandwiches, including the veggie cheesesteak—seitan (a meat substitute) topped with roasted onions, peppers, and provolone—and the three cheese melt of smoked mozzarella, white cheddar, and blue cheese crumbles. For those who require meat in their meals, try the Tuscan chicken melt: juicy pieces of chicken intermingle with pesto, roasted red onions, and sun-dried tomatoes. Not sure you'll want a whole sandwich? Try one of the halvesies, a half-salad (or soup), half-sandwich selection popular with the lunch crowd. » *4165 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 681-MELT. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* $

NECTAR

There's nothing lean about the dining experience at Nectar. Whether it's the earthiness of smoked chanterelle mushrooms centered in a bowl of corn chowder, a trio of shrimp fritters lined up atop a ribbon of tomatillo chutney, or a low-and-slow beef brisket piled on creamy polenta and brick red chile sauce, Chef Julie Francis creates dishes that inspire food lust in even the most unflappable diner. Francis is deeply committed to seasonal ingredients. In autumn, a deceptively simple salad dressed with sherry orange vinaigrette is elevated from merely good to exquisite because the greens are just-picked, and the local honey crisp apples freckled with toasted walnuts and currants are fully ripe. The depth of flavor in

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braised lamb shoulder from nearby Turner Farm enhances the humble Israeli couscous beneath. Twice monthly, the popular Nectar dinner club features a local farmer or artisan on-site, their specialty presented in five courses. » *1000 Delta Ave., Mt. Lookout, (513) 929-0525. Dinner Wed–Sat, brunch Sun. MCC.* **$$**

20 BRIX

This retail wine shop and restaurant is such a natural fit among Milford's mom-and-pop shops and offbeat boutiques that you'd never guess the place is a result of years-long demographic studies and focus groups. With its high, sage-green ceiling, exposed brick walls, comfortable booths, and mix of classic jazz and black-and-white films that play silently on the bar TV, 20 Brix is a thoroughly charming restaurant where both the suit-and-tie and the plaid-and-Dockers crowds will feel at home. Executive chef Paul Barraco offers a Mediterranean menu that nearly matches the panache of the six-page wine menu. There are simply too many dishes (and wines) to describe in this space, but 20 Brix is well on its way to becoming a true destination restaurant in downtown Milford. » *101 Main St., Milford, (513) 831-2749. Lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MCC, DS.* **$$**

FRENCH

GREENUP CAFÉ

From the tangerine and rose-colored walls in the main dining room to the servers dressed in T-shirts and jeans, Greenup Café's slogan—"a French bohemian place"—is both a statement and a standard. But the food, artistically prepared and moderately priced, is first-class. Chef de cuisine John Kinzey's menu changes every two weeks, and features dishes such as a crab cakes with pineapple chutney appetizer, and a bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin entrée. Comforting and chic all at once. » *308 Greenup St., Covington, (859) 261-3663. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Tues–Sat, brunch Sat & Sun, coffee and pastries seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$**

JEANRO BISTRO

With plenty of charming bonhomie and hearty, unpretentious French-country fare, this lively bistro is always crowded with a mixture of downtown residents and hotel guests. Servers clad in black aprons hustle about, delivering bowls of garlicky mussels mariniere or the buttered and bronzed croque monsieur deluxe, a sandwich that's a glorious ooze of ham and swiss topped with bechamel sauce and an egg over-easy. The menu changes little, so you can be assured you'll find the classics: crocks of dark onion soup sealed with caps of melted, blistered Swiss; sauteed calf's liver and onions better than your grandmother made; and a coq au vin so deeply infused with the flavors of garlic, bacon, and red wine sauce you may start humming "La Marseillaise." Amid the dark polished wood, exposed brick, giant mirrors, and vintage French lithographs, the boisterous clatter of plates and

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spirited conversation reverberate the soul of a Parisian bistro. » *413 Vine St., downtown, (513) 621-1465. Lunch Mon–Sat, dinner seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$**

ITALIAN

ADRIATICO'S

Everything about this place says it's about the pizza: the herbed sauce, the assault of the cheese, the toppings. It's all evenly distributed, so you get a taste in every bite. Adriatico's still delivers the tastiest pizza in Clifton. On any given night the aroma wafts through every dorm on campus. It's that popular because it's that good. Being inexpensive doesn't hurt either. » *3205 Jefferson Ave., Clifton, (513) 281-4344. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC.* **$**

BARRESI'S

Set next to the railroad tracks that run the length of Blue Ash Road in the leafy, quiet neighborhood of Deer Park, at its heart Barresi's Italian Restaurant is essentially the same family style Italian-American restaurant that Sal and Odessa Baresi opened in 1963. In 2005, former employee Sarah Wagner Barnes bought the place. She's changed little on the menu, striving instead to uphold her inheritance: chewy strips of fried calamari and paper thin slices of beef carpaccio; Caprese and Caesar salads; Osso Bucco Milanese with risotto and a chunky tomato sauce; seven versions of veal scallopine. And of course the basket of zeppoles. In addition to the veal variations, more than a dozen seafood, chicken, and steak dishes are created by interchanging familiar preparations: Florentine (spinach, cream cheese sauce, and pecans); Sicilian (capers, garlic, olive oil, and lemon); Marsala; and lobster cream sauce among them. But despite reduced portion pricing (a full portion of linguine with scampi is $30; the "three-quarter size" is $25) Barresi's is more expensive than Primavista, and nearly as expensive as Boca or Nicola's. » *4111 Webster Ave., Deer Park, (513) 793-2540. Dinner Tues–Sat. MCC, DC.* **$$$**

GERMANO'S

Owner and chef Domenico Germano prepares the standards of southern and central-southern Italian cooking, using a foundation of recognizable sauces that cling to various pastas, meats, and seafood. Though the printed menu is concise, servers quickly rattle off a half-dozen specials nightly and anything can be custom ordered. Consistently fine choices are the humble veal cutlets with golden breading, basil scented tomato sauce, and aged Parmigiano-Reggiano; little gnocchi in a gossamer cream sauce flecked with peas and prosciutto; and a fetching spaghetti, glossy with olive oil and easily twirled around sundried tomatoes, artichokes, garlic cloves, mushrooms, and onions. Here, Domenico Germano celebrates the foods he loves with you. » *9415 Montgomery Rd., Montgomery, (513) 794-1155. Lunch Tues–Fri, dinner Tues–Sat. MCC.* **$$$**

PRIMAVISTA

Besides offering the old world flavors of Italy, Primavista also serves up a specialty no other restaurant can match: a bird's eye view of Cincinnati from the west side. Chef Chris Prince's kitchen is equally comfortable with northern and southern regional specialties: a Venetian carpaccio of paper thin raw beef sparked by slivers of aged Parmesan and fruity olive oil; house-made fresh mozzarella stuffed with pesto and mushrooms; or artichoke hearts with snails and mushrooms in a creamy Gorgonzola sauce from Lombardy. Among the classics, nothing is more restorative than the pasta e fagioli, a hearty soup of cannellini, ditali pasta, and bacon. Most of the pastas are cooked just a degree more mellow than al dente so that they soak up the fragrant tomato basil or satiny cream sauces. The fork-tender osso buco Milanese, with its marrow-filled center bone and salty-sweet brown sauce (marinara and lemon juice), is simply superb. Desserts present further problems; you'll be hard-pressed to decide between the house-made tiramisu or bread pudding with caramel sauce, marsala soaked raisins, and cream. » *810 Matson Pl., Price Hill, (513) 251-6467. Dinner seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* **$$**

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VIA VITE

If The Genius of Water is our Trevi Fountain, this is our osteria. Cristian Pietoso serves up comforting favorites—lamb shank so tender it practically jumps off the bone; dreamy polenta that's porridge-like, buttery, and sharp from a pitch-perfect dose of Parmigiano-Reggiano; a thick chop of lightly seasoned and grilled pork served simply with family recipe peperonata (a compote of yellow and red peppers); a bowl of penne pasta with classic Bolognese sauce; a murky, sweet-and-smoky bowl of the second-best cioppino in the city (the best is served a half mile away at Via Vite's sibling, Nicola's). The All-Italian wine list features selections bright enough with acidity to be menu-friendly and fruity enough to enjoy on their own, including Dievole's Pinocchio, an inexpensive Nero d'Avola similar to a new-world syrah with lots of plum and pepper. Via Vite is bright, contemporary, and fun—the way a restaurant at the heart of the city center should be. » *520 Vine St., downtown, (513) 721-8483. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC.* **$$**

VINCENZO'S RISTORANTE ITALIANO

Chef Vincenzo Mazzocca and his wife, Andrea, serve unpretentious homemade dishes with fresh, vivid flavors, including an antipasto plate of proscuitto, wedges of fresh Parmigiano, fresh mozzarella, and crostini with a salty olive spread; or one of their many specials in a former Texas Roadhouse Grill on Chester Road in Sharonville. Mazzocca is at his best when he focuses on the substance of regional Italian cooking: simplicity and purity of flavors. An appetizer of briny-sweet, plump mussels in white wine sauce is outstanding, the clear, thin sauce begging for bread long after the mussels are gone. Caesar salad arrives on chilled plates so that the romaine—tossed in a well-balanced lemon and anchovy dressing—is crisp and crunchy. Funghi con Salsicce, silky mushrooms and Italian sausage suspended in fruity chianti sauce, is simply sublime. Mazzocca's Pomodoro sauce retains its character by a brief cooking and an uncomplicated recipe. The large shrimp—in any dish—are bursting with sweet-sea flavor. The panna cotta, made by Andrea, is divine, as is the sense of welcome and family that the Mazzoccas bring to the table. » *11525 Chester Rd., Sharonville, (513) 771-0022. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* **$$**

JAPANESE

ANDO

It's a pleasure to pull a stool up to the bar of this hushed, almost somber restaurant and watch sushi master Keiichi Ando carving mellow yellowtail, soft oily salmon, exquisite chu-toro (tuna belly) with as much expertise as a gem cutter. Servers—even the American ones—exhibit the same deference. A bowl of slightly salty, steamed edamame disappears just as a dish of delicate, barely fried tofu squares appears. You could conclude with a bowl of warm rice, a tangle of tempura onion slices, squid, and shrimp on top, but then you'd miss the spectacular black sesame ice cream with its top note of vanilla and long, toasty finish. » *5889 Pfeiffer Rd., Blue Ash, (513) 791-8687. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Tues–Sun. MCC, DS.* **$$$**

KYOTO

Owner Jason Shi seems to know everybody's name as he chats up diners, guiding them through the extensive sushi and sashimi menu. Five young sushi chefs, all part of Shi's family, work at light speed behind the bar, a choreography backlit by rows of gleaming liquor bottles. Dinner proceeds with glorious chaos as a feisty Carla Tortelli–like server delivers one dish after another—slivers of giant clam on ice in a super-sized martini glass, a volcanic tower of chopped fatty tuna hidden inside overlapping layers of thin avocado slices, smoky grilled New Zealand mussels drizzled with spicy mayo, and delicate slices of a samurai roll—all between shots of chilled sake. » *12082 Montgomery Rd., Symmes Twp., (513) 583-8897. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC.* **$$**

MIYOSHI

Located in the midst of Florence commercial parks, this sparkling clean restaurant offers authentic cuisine in a comfortable atmosphere.

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Mac Attack

Curiosity, not a craving, leads to a sample of McDonald's signature sandwich.

BY DONNA COVRETT

An overweight man sits nearby, talking into a cell phone and taking large bites from a Big Mac. It's gone in 60 seconds. A substantial mound of fries and nearly a quart of soda disappear just as quickly. At first, nothing about the context of the scene may seem extraordinary, if it weren't for the content of the call. He's relating a detailed description of the heart surgery he is undergoing the next morning, and the pre-op appointment he had just come from. "I don't get it, I'm as fit as a fiddle," he says, "I don't know how I got heart disease."

I also have a Big Mac. My companion watches as I peek underneath the bun. He's amused by my curiosity and warns that it's better not to know. But I do know—a few things, anyway. I know the Big Mac is the apocryphal "gourmet" hamburger: a triple-decker pop culture phenom that debuted in 1968. I know that one of these burgers is calorie laden (540), loaded with fat (29 grams), sodium (1,040 milligrams) and sugar (9 grams). Like everyone, I know the jingle: "Two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun." What I don't know is how it tastes, because I've never eaten one. Nor have I had the Quarter Pounder that my companion is inhaling, nor any of McDonald's burgers. What's more, I've lived my entire life until this moment without *ever* consuming a fast food burger—Burger King, Wendy's, and Jack in the Box included. Granted, many of those years I spent as a vegetarian, but even in the years since I've renewed my meat lover's membership, I've studiously avoided factory burgers. We know that a diet of fat-, salt-, and sugar-laden fast food has significantly contributed to our super-sized culture (in 2000, 64 percent of Americans were classified as overweight or obese), and consequently to an increase in diabetes, joint pain, stroke, and heart disease. In addition to health issues, authors such as Eric Schlosser and Michael Pollan have made strong cases for the negative political, economic, and environmental impact of a fast food nation. But during the field research for this issue's burger story, I became curious. What's the appeal? With so many flavorful, affordable, cooked-to-order burgers available, why are millions of factory burgers consumed daily?

And so, here I sit, and already I have misgivings. This is a burger? The meat patties are noticeably meager, hard, and gray. The cheese resembles a piece of limp plastic, and the few shreds of lettuce are more white than green. The most sizeable components are the three layers of spongy bread and sauce. By the second room temperature bite, I get it. Not the flavor, as there is none beyond white bread slathered in Thousand Island dressing. It's the texture. Little chewing is required; it simply disintegrates in the mouth like homogenous baby food. It's my first and last fast food burger. But not for the man scheduled for heart surgery. He's at the counter ordering another.

Contact the dining editor at dcovrett@cincinnatimagazine.com

Impeccably fresh seafood usually means expensive, but reasonable prices make this a find for those who love Japanese dining and know that the succession of small dishes can add up to a large bill. The menu is organized in the Euro-American manner of appetizers, salads, soups, and entrees, but ingredients and flavor are pristine Japanese. The tofu is exquisitely silky, and when served chilled with bonito, shredded seaweed, and scallions, it resembles tender custard rather than curd. Crisp saltwater eel (anago) tempura comes with a tiny mound of powdered salt for dipping, which clings to the hot batter and melts on the tongue much like confectioner's sugar on a hot doughnut. Cleanse the palate with savory red miso soup before the omakase (chef's selection) of bright sushi and sashimi, and follow with one of the onigiri—warm sticky rice balls stuffed with cooked kelp wrapped in seaweed—or a dessert of ripe pineapple. » *8660 Bankers St., Florence, (859) 525-6564. Lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MCC, DS.* **$$**

MEXICAN/ SOUTH-WESTERN

NADA

The brains behind Boca deliver authentic, contemporary, high-quality Mexican fare downtown. There's a wonderfully cheeky spirit throughout the entire place—Mexican comics on the menu covers, telenovelas in the bathroom, framed photographs of a Nada cook in drag on the walls. When it comes to the food, you'll find a concise menu, including tacos that seem straight from a Mexican street vendor; salads and sides, including a plantain and potato mash; cazuelas (Mexican stews); large plates; and desserts. The lamb cazuela (there are also chicken and pork options) rocks macho: the braised lamb, ancho mole, raisins, and poblano rice combine to create a virile cologne of south central Mexico, all heat and smoke. Traditional tacos—of mahi mahi, barbacoa (short ribs), and carnitas (braised pork)—share space with modern dishes. Pork chops get a smoky adobo chile rub before being expertly grilled and served with an orange habañero demi-glace; garlicky charred corn kernels and toasted fregula, a grain similar to couscous, serve as a bed for a filet of mahi mahi; dreamy mac-and-cheese looks harmless, but there's just enough of a roasted poblano and jalapeno punch to have you reaching for another icy margarita. » *600 Walnut St., downtown, (513) 721-6232. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* **$$**

TAQUERIA MERCADO

On a Saturday night, Taqueria Mercado is a lively fiesta, with seemingly half of the local Hispanic community guzzling margaritas and cervezas, or carrying out sacks of burritos and carnitas tacos—pork tenderized by a long simmer, its edges frizzled and crispy. The Mercado's strip mall interior, splashed with a large, colorful mural, is equally energetic: the bustling semi-open kitchen; a busy counter that handles a constant stream of take-out orders; a clamorous, convivial

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[RESTAURANTS]

chatter in Spanish and English. Try camarones a la plancha, 12 chubby grilled shrimp tangled with grilled onions (be sure to specify if you like your onions well done). The starchiness of the rice absorbs the caramelized onion juice, offset by the crunch of lettuce, buttery slices of avocado, and the cool-hot pico de gallo. A shrimp quesadilla paired with one of their cheap and potent margaritas is worth the drive alone. » *6507 Dixie Hwy., Fairfield, (513) 942-4943. Lunch and dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* $

SEAFOOD

BELUGA

Beneath the trendy lounge atmosphere is a well-done dining experience. If you arrive early enough, you'll find the back dining room serene if under-lit (making it difficult to read the menu), with fresh flowers on the table and a window framing a lone tree and Zen garden. The pale, modern setting is a perfect complement to chef Paendin "Toon" Yongkanaysin's thoughtful food, as well as executive chef Masahide Masuda's sushi and sashimi. Yongkanaysin's seafood entrées are the best, like the seared ahi tuna accompanied by an "A.A.C. Roll" (avocado, asparagus, and cucumber), crunchy seaweed tempura, and tomato wasabi sauce. » *3520 Edwards Rd., Hyde Park, (513) 533-4444. Dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* $$

McCORMICK & SCHMICK'S

The daily rotation here reads like a fisherman's wish list: fresh lobsters from the coast of Maine, ahi tuna from Hawaii, North Carolina catfish, Massachusetts cod. But high-quality ingredients are only half the equation; preparation is the other. Flaky Parmesan-crusted tilapia, with a squeeze of lemon, makes the taste buds dance. The spacious digs and attentive waitstaff bring a touch of class to Fountain Square, and make it a sophisticated destination. It's likely to remain a favorite. After all, it's right in the middle of things. » *21 E. Fifth St., downtown, (513) 721-9339. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner seven days. MCC, DC, DS.* $$

STEAKS

CARLO & JOHNNY

Instead of the tongue-in-cheek homage to movies and entertainers (one or two of those menu items are still hanging around), the new and improved menu is sophisticated and stylish. But the stars are still the 16 delectable steaks. Not sure which to choose? If you prefer brawny flavor over buttery texture, go for one of the three bone-in rib cuts. Or if it's that melt-in-your-mouth experience that raises your serotonin levels, C&J features several tenderloin cuts, including the hard to find bone-in filet. There are the usual suspects of chops, et al, but we found the Kentucky bison strip steak one of the more interesting beef alternatives. Unfortunately, the picture book dessert menu barely rates above Denny's. C'mon, Mr. Ruby, house-made desserts deserve five-star rehab too. » *9769 Montgomery Rd., Montgomery (513) 936-8600, www.jeffruby.com. Dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* $$$

GUENTHER'S STEAK AND SEAFOOD HOUSE

Guenther's offers a great steakhouse experience at half the price of the Kobe beef emporiums. Their Maryland crab cakes are made from 80 percent crab meat and 20 percent filler; the sauerkraut balls traverse from golden crunch to creamy and back again. (The original owner was obviously German.) The classic California-style "Louis" salad with Thousand Island dressing is packed with crab and shrimp. Their Lyonnaise potatoes are woven with onions, slick with butter, and tossed with crisp shards of bacon, and the bread basket is filled with house-made light rye bread. Or maybe it's just the center cut pork chops and a New York strip—with actual grill marks—lightly seasoned and simply brushed with butter. There's no other local steak and seafood restaurant that delivers so much for so little. » *7886 Cincinnati-Dayton Rd., West Chester, (513) 777-8880, www.guenthers.com. Dinner seven days. MCC, DS.* $$

JEFF RUBY'S

Filled most nights with local scenesters and power brokers (and those who think they are), everything in this urban steakhouse is generous—from the portions to the expert service to the, er, cleavage. Black-jacketed waiters with white floor-length aprons deliver two-fisted martinis and stacks of king crab legs, or mounds of greens dressed in thin vinaigrettes or thick, creamy emulsions. An occasional tuna, salmon, or halibut appears, and there's a small but decent assortment of chops—lamb, veal, and pork. But most customers, even the willowy model types, inhale slabs of beef (USDA prime, dry aged on the premises) like they're dining in a crack house for carnivores. The best of these is Jeff Ruby's Jewel, nearly a pound-and-a-half of bone-in rib eye. This is steak tailor-made for movers and shakers. » *700 Walnut St., downtown, (513) 784-1200, www.jeffruby.com. Dinner Mon–Sat. MCC.* $$$

THE PRECINCT

Housed in a 1901 Hannaford & Sons–designed police stationhouse, this is the coziest of Jeff Ruby's restaurants. The menu is what you might expect: prime aged beef, a couple of chops, meaty cuts of fish, and lobster. Ruby's Jewel cut, the rib eye, is the very best steak on the menu. The list of sides and apps is short, but should you wish for some Fettuccine Alfredo with your porterhouse, you'll get it with a floor show, in a classic tableside preparation. Impeccable service is largely responsible for a restaurant still at the top of its game long after others have come and gone. » *311 Delta Ave., Columbia-Tusculum (513) 321-5454, www.jeffruby.com. Dinner seven days. MCC.* $$$

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VIETNAMESE

CILANTRO

Here, the menu of appetizers, meal-sized soups (pho), stir-fried noodles, and vermicelli salads has something for everyone, including 15 items for vegetarians. The most popular is the vermicelli noodle bowl with shrimp, which is both delicate and bold. The goi cuon—diaphanous fresh rice rolls stuffed with chilled vermicelli, shrimp, pork, or tofu, and fresh basil leaves—are the type of fast food we should all choose more often. » *2516 Clifton Ave., Clifton Heights, (513) 281-1732.Lunch and dinner seven days. MC, V.* $

SONG LONG

The menu does have a substantial Chinese section, and sure, the interior has spent most of its life dressed in the mandatory Asian-American restaurant colors of red and gold (it's been updated to, um, rose and yellow). But make no mistake, the reason there's a line at the door on weekend nights is the fine Vietnamese specialties cooked and served by the Le family. Begin with the goi cuon, the cold rolls of moistened rice paper wrapped around vermicelli noodles, julienned cucumbers, lettuce, cilantro, and mung bean sprouts. Banh xeo, a platter-sized pan-fried rice crepe folded over substantial nuggets of chicken and shrimp, mushrooms, and wilted mung sprouts. The phos, meal-sized soups eaten for breakfast, are good, but the pho dac biet is Song Long's best. Crisp-tender vegetables, slices of beef, herbs, and scallions glide through the noodle-streaked broth. When you're ordering your entrée, be careful: Mr. Le has a much heavier chili hand than Mrs. Le. Ask who is cooking and order accordingly if you don't want your eyes to roll to the back of your head. » *1737 Section Rd., Roselawn, (513) 351-7631. Lunch and dinner Mon–Sat. MCC, DC, DS.* $

WILD GINGER ASIAN BISTRO

Wild Ginger Asian Bistro's ability to satisfy a deep desire for Vietnamese and Thai fusion cuisine is evidenced by their signature Hee Ma roll—a fortress of seaweed-wrapped rolls filled with shrimp tempura, asparagus, avocado, and topped with red tuna, pulled crab stick, tempura flakes, a bit of masago, scallions, and of course, spicy mayo. It's tasty, even though the sweet fried floodwall of tempura and spicy mayo overpowered the tuna completely. The spicy pad char entrée was a solid seven out of 10: broccoli, carrots, cabbage, succulent red bell peppers, green beans, and beef, accented with basil and lime leaves in a peppercorn-and-chili brown sauce. The paper moon appetizer was the one dud; a flavorless mash of minced and blended shrimp, chicken, vermicelli noodles and (supposedly) onion, fried in triangular wonton wraps and served with a sweet plum sauce. Honestly, it could've used some spicy mayo. » *3655 Edwards Rd., Hyde Park, (513) 533-9500. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sun. MCC, DS.* $$

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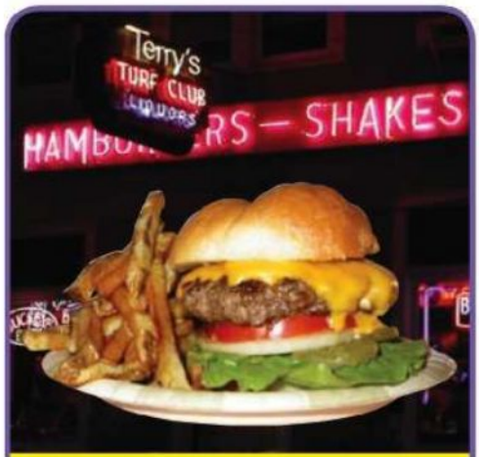

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July

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALFRED EISENSTAEDT

Look of Love

The Art of Caring brings 200 famous (see above) photos to the Museum Center

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The Castle Retreat

Are there too many bands at the Forecastle Festival?

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Later Is Now

Devo on display at the Ohio Historical Society

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Q&A

Carolyn Mazloomi on jazz, art, and how the two meld in African-American quilts

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ART

Soul Food» Catastrophe curated *The Art of Caring: A Look at Life Through Photography.* The exhibition was in its early planning stages when Hurricane Katrina ripped through New Orleans, and the disaster shaped the project's huge heart. Art historian Cynthia Goodman of Cincinnati gathered 200 classic photographs by the likes of Annie Leibovitz, Gordon Parks, and Nan Goldin. That's Marie Hanson's *Margaret O'Brien and her Spaniel, Maggie* above. Plus there's Alfred Eisenstaedt's exuberant *V-J Day, Times Square, New York City,* and more recent images like Joe McNally's portrait of 9/11 firefighters. Looking for amazing grace? Picture this. —LINDA VACCARIELLO

JULY 9–SEPT 19. SEE WEBSITE FOR TIMES. ADMISSION: ADULTS $8.50, SENIORS $7.50, CHILDREN $6.50. CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER, 1301 WESTERN AVE., WEST END, (513) 287-7000, WWW.CINCYMUSEUM.ORG

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIE HANSON

edited by ELIZABETH MILLER

HAVE AN EVENT TO LIST? Send us the event's name, date, time, address, cost, contact number, and a brief description. Online submissions preferred (see URL below). Deadline is eight weeks prior to issue date (September items are due August 1). There is no charge for inclusion and no connection with advertising. We are not responsible for late or misdirected submissions, nor can we guarantee your event will be listed.

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FAX (513) 562-2746

WEB SUBMISSIONS www.cincinnatimagazine.com/calendar/submitevent.aspx

SPECIAL EVENTS

TOYOTA'S MOVIE NIGHT

Thru Aug 28: Bring the blankets and chairs for double-feature movies on the Square's big screen. Check website for movie schedule. **Admission:** free. Sat 7:30 & 9:30 pm. Fountain Square, Fifth & Vine Sts., downtown, www.myfountainsquare.com

PNC MUSIC SERIES

Thru Sept 16: Live music with nightly genres. Monday jazz, Tuesday country, Wednesday reggae, Thursday salsa, Friday indie rock, Sunday R&B. **Admission:** free. Mon, Tues & Sun 7–9 pm; Wed 5–9 pm; Thurs 7–10 pm; Fri 7–11 pm. Acoustic Thursdays noon–1 pm. Fountain Square, Fifth & Vine Sts., downtown, www.myfountainsquare.com

LAROSA'S BALLOON GLOW

July 3: More than 20 colorful hot air balloons take flight amid a festival of live music, plus fireworks at 10 pm. **Admission:** free. Sat 1–10 pm. Coney Island, 6201 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (513) 232-8230.

DIVE-IN MOVIES

July 3–Aug 14: Catch family flicks while floating in Ohio's largest wave pool. **Admission:** $22–$27.99. Sat 9 pm. The Beach Waterpark, 2590 Waterpark Dr., Mason, (513) 398-7946.

BOOK SIGNING: JANE GREEN

July 8: *The New York Times* best-selling author signs and discusses her newest book, *Promises to Keep.* **Admission:** free. Thurs 7 pm. Joseph-Beth Booksellers, 2692 Madison Rd., Norwood, (513) 396-8960.

ST. RITA FEST

July 9–11: This annual event satisfies your craving for mock turtle soup and plenty of gambling (for a good cause!). Benefits the St. Rita School for the Deaf. **Admission:** $2. Fri 7 pm–midnight,

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Play Me, I'm Yours

Cincinnati's Classical Public Radio

WGUC 90.9

Beginning the first week of August, Cincinnati Public Radio presents ***Play Me, I'm Yours*** by British artist Luke Jerram in celebration of WGUC's 50th Anniversary.

Jerram will install painted pianos throughout the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area – on streets, in public squares and parks, and at other fun locations – for anyone to discover and play. Like a creative blank canvas, the pianos present unlimited opportunities for your inspiration and enjoyment.

The installation also includes a rich online social media component that encourages everyone to share video, pictures, recordings and thoughts about the project, building on the sense of community and extending the spirit of WGUC's anniversary celebration.

There are many ways to be involved, from donating a piano, to volunteering, to watching one during its time on the street, to sitting down to play. You can learn more at *playmeimyourscincy.com*. WGUC thanks our sponsors.

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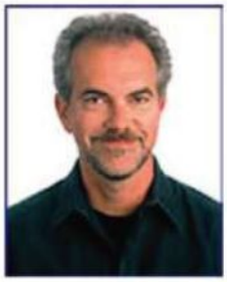
COMPOSERS DATEBOOK



What do Chopin and Corelli have in common with Chick Corea and John Corigliano? Listen to *Composers Datebook* and find out! *Composers Datebook* is a daily feature designed to inform, engage, and entertain listeners with timely information about composers of the past and present. Host John Zech has been a classical music announcer, producer, and program host for more than 20 years. Hear *Composers Datebook* weekdays at 6 am and 7 pm.

MET OPERA FINALIST CONCERT

Join 90.9 on Sunday, July 11, 7:30 pm, for this special event. The concert showcases the finalists of the 2010 National Council Auditions. The winners were selected from nine finalists who performed arias with the Met Orchestra, conducted by Marco Armiliato. Each winner receives a cash prize of $15,000 and, even more importantly, the opportunity to launch a major operatic career.

The Grand Finals Concert is hosted by legendary Met artist Marilyn Horne. Mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade gives a special performance featuring arias from *Werther* and *La Périchole*, her farewell performance on the Met stage.

This annual event is sponsored by the Metropolitan Opera National Council.

WGUC.ORG

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91.7 WVXU CINCINNATI

Whad'Ya Know? Comes to Cincinnati

Michael Feldman's Whad'Ya Know?

Michael Feldman

Whad'Ya Know? **is a Quiz-Jazz-Comedy radio extravaganza, hosted by the incomparable Michael Feldman!**

However you describe it, *Whad'Ya Know?* with Michael Feldman and his trusty sidekick announcer Jim Packard are on their way to Cincinnati for a live radio broadcast on Saturday, July 17 at the Aronoff Center.

The show begins at 11 am, so everyone needs to be seated by 10:30. Tickets are on sale now through the Cincinnati Arts Association at 513-621-ARTS or *cincinnatiarts.org*.

For the really BIG *Whad'Ya Know?* fans, think about being a VIP ticket holder...not only will you have the best seats in the house (and may be lucky enough to chat with Michael during the show) but you'll be invited to a post-show reception with the *Whad'Ya Know* cast!

Saturday, July 17
10:30 am
Aronoff Center

Sponsored by Rookwood Pottery Company

Capitol Steps - July 2 at 7:30 pm

JULY PROGRAMMING NOTES

Enjoy great comedy and music specials in July on 91.7.

Friday, July 2, 7:30 PM
Capitol Steps: Politics Takes a Holiday
The sharp-as-a-tack satirical group skewers all the latest political shenanigans.

Sunday, July 4, 8 PM
Carole King & James Taylor: You've Got a Friend **features the music legends in perfomance and discussion.**

Sunday, July 11, 8 PM
Sergio Mendes **explores the life and career of one of Brazil's most enduring exports.**

SNAP JUDGEMENT

Snap Judgment, **a new 5-part series beginning Sunday, July 18, at 8 pm, tells stories about extraordinary and *Snap Judgment*'s raw, intimate, and musical brand of storytelling dares listeners to see a sliver of the world through another's eyes.**

Host Glynn Washington will take you on a narrative journey – leaping from one person's frying pan into another

driven musical delivery, paired with lush sound design, drops you into the very heart of what matters.

The fast-paced (sometimes dark, sometimes playful) narrative highlights people from across the globe who put everything on the line.

Glynn Washington explains, "It's storytelling...with a beat. It's the Robert Frost thing: the roads diverge, and you have to make a choice."

Glynn Washington hosts the new series "Snap Judgement."

wvxu.org

Around the Block ▪ Around the World

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Sat 4 pm–midnight, Sun 1–10 pm. 1720 Glendale-Milford Rd., Evendale, (513) 772-7005.

THE FUTURE OF WATER

July 10–Aug 15: Exhibit highlighting Cincinnati's efforts to clean the region's waterways. **Admission:** free. Mon–Sun 10 am–5 pm. Krohn Conservatory, 1501 Eden Park Dr., Eden Park, (513) 352-4080.

MICHAEL FELDMAN'S WHAD'YA KNOW?

July 17: A nationwide broadcast of questions, guests, music, and unique prizes with the National Public Radio personality. **Tickets:** $27.50–$62.50. Sat 10:30 am. Procter & Gamble Hall, Aronoff Center for the Arts, 650 Walnut St., downtown, (513) 621-2787.

DON'T MISS! GAY BINGO

July 18: Not your grandma's Bingo—expect drag queen performances, outrageous costumes, and prizes. Benefits the STOP AIDS organization. **Admission:** $20. Sun 6 pm. Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati, 1127 Vine St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 421-3555.

TASTE OF THE TAFT

July 21: An annual summer luncheon lecture series of local luminaries who discuss art, culture, history, and society. Programs take place on the terrace and include a box lunch. This month: *Heroes of Ohio.* Storyteller Rick Sowash tells tales of life-changing Ohioans. **Admission:** $22, reservations required. Wed noon. Taft Museum of Art, 316 Pike St., downtown, (513) 684-4515.

DON'T MISS! ARCHBISHOP MOELLER HIGH SCHOOL 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

July 24: The Cincinnati Pops Orchestra performs at a festive celebration, open to the public. **Tickets:** $5–$10. Sat 6 pm. Archbishop Moeller High School, 9001 Montgomery Rd., Montgomery, (513) 791-1680.

ROLLIN' ON THE RIVER CAR SHOW

July 25: More than 100 classic cars, plus live music and food booths. Benefits the Kiwanis Club of Riverview-Delhi Hills. **Admission:** free; car registration $10–$15. Sun 9 am–3:30 pm. Fernbank Park, 50 Thornton Ave., Sayler Park, www.rollinontherivercarshow.com

SALSA FESTIVAL

July 29–Aug 1: The third annual celebration includes food, performances, live music, dance classes, and an attempt to break the world record for largest salsa class. Shake your *bon-bon!* See website for event admission prices, times, and locations. www.cincinnatisalsafestival.com

GALLERIES

5TH STREET GALLERY

July 9–Aug 7: *Joyce Phillips Young.* Local artist presents bold acrylic paintings that often use people as subject matter. Mon–Sat 10 am–6 pm, Fri 10 am–9 pm. 55 W. Fifth St., downtown, (513) 579-9333.

CARL SOLWAY GALLERY

Thru July 30: *Works from the Gallery Collection.* Showcasing 57 modern and contemporary artists. **Hours:** Mon–Fri 9 am–5 pm, Sat noon–5. 424 Findlay St., West End, (513) 621-0069.

MIDDLETOWN ARTS CENTER

July 6–Aug 15: *143rd Annual American Watercolor Society Exhibit.* A juried selection of 40 watercolor paintings selected from more than 1,000 submitted works. **Hours:** 9 am–4 pm, Tues–Thurs 9 am–9 pm, Sat & Sun noon–4 pm. 130 N. Verity Pkwy., Middletown, (513) 424-2417.

PENDLETON ART CENTER

July 30: *Final Friday.* More than 150 artists open their studios to the public. **Admission:** free, valet parking $4. Fri 6–10 pm. 1310 Pendleton St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 559-3958.

DON'T MISS! PHYLLIS WESTON GALLERY

Thru July 31: *Tom Levine: Recent Paintings, Collages, and Etching.* Native Cincinnatian presents work to benefit the Cincinnati Opera. **July 15–Aug 28:** *Charley Harper: Unseen Originals.* Cincinnati-based minimal realist painter who created bold-colored, often-whimsical nature works. **Hours:** Tues–Sat 11 am–5 pm, and by appointment. 2005 Madison Rd., O'Bryonville, (513) 321-5200.

ALICE F. AND HARRIS K. WESTON ART GALLERY

Thru Aug 29: *The House in My Head.* A group exhibition that examines perceptions of the house. **Hours:** Tues–Sat 10 am–5:30 pm, until 8 pm performance nights; Sun noon–5 pm, until 7 pm performance nights. Aronoff Center for the Arts, 650 Walnut St., downtown, (513) 977-4165.

[SPECIAL EVENT]

VENUS FRIDAYS

»July 16 & 23: Enjoy the best views of our yellow-clouded neighboring planet. Reservations required. **Admission:** $6 adults, $4 children. Fri 8:30–10:30 pm. The Cincinnati Observatory, 3489 Observatory Pl., Hyde Park, (513) 321-5186.

AQUARIUM/ MUSEUMS

DON'T MISS! CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM

Thru Sept 26: *Vegas 360.* Large-scale works by Cincinnati photographer Thomas Schiff capture the eccentricity of the Strip. **Thru Sept 5:** *Walker Evans: Decade by Decade.* Iconic images by the famed photographer whose career spanned five decades. **Admission:** free. **Hours:** Tues–Sun 11 am–5 pm. 953 Eden Park Dr., Eden Park, (513) 721-2787.

CINCINNATI MUSEUM CENTER

Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX: Thru July 1: *Under the Sea.* **July 2–Nov 11:** *Mysteries of the Great Lakes.* Follow a water drop's journey from Lake Superior to Lake Ontario, passing cliffs, shipwrecks, and millions of people. **July 2–Nov 11:** *Legends of Flight.* Take a high-flying flight through the evolution of modern aviation. **Tickets:** members $4.50–$5.50, nonmembers $5.50–$7.50; double features members $9–$11, nonmembers $9–$13. Call for film schedules. **Cincinnati Historical Society Library Hours:** Mon–Fri noon–5 pm, Sat 10 am–5 pm. (513) 287-7030. **Thru Oct 24:** *American Journey: The Life and Photography of James Presley Ball.* More than 400 photographs and artifacts document the life and work of 19th-century African-American daguerreotypist, entrepreneur, and abolitionist who lived and practiced in Cincinnati from 1849 to 1871. **Thru Jan 2, 2011:** *America I Am: The African-American Imprint.* More than 250 rare artifacts span five centuries of African-American history. **Admission:** members $5–$8; nonmembers $8–$12. **Museum of Natural History and Science:** Permanent exhibitions cover a variety of natural history topics. **Duke Children's Museum:** Interactive facility with exhibitions for children. **Admission:** adults $8, seniors $7, children 3–12 $6, toddlers 1–2 $4.50. **Hours:** Mon–Sat 10 am–5 pm, Sun 11 am–6 pm. 1301 Western Ave., West End, (513) 287-7000.

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

Thru August 22: *Pat Steir: Water and Stone.* Known for dripped "waterfall" paintings, artist creates a site-specific installation to showcase the interplay between paint, her pouring technique, and gravity. *Shepard Fairey: Supply and Demand.* Renowned political provocateur presents about 250 pieces, including the iconic Obama "Hope" image. **Thru October 31:** *Ernesto Neto: Dancing Allowed.* Multi-sensory installations of stretchy, stocking-like material extending from the ceiling. **Admission:** $4.50–$7.50; free Mon 5–9 pm. **Hours:** Mon 10 am–9 pm, Wed–Fri 10 am–6 pm, Sat & Sun 11 am–6 pm. 44 E. Sixth St., downtown, (513) 345-8400.

DON'T MISS! LLOYD LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Thru Aug 27: *The Great Ohio Wilderness and Its Native People.* Painter Mary Louise Holt's exhibition depicts wildlife, landscape, and indigenous people before European settlers arrived. **Hours:** Mon–Fri 8:30 am–4 pm. 917 Plum St., downtown, (513) 721-3707.

NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREEDOM CENTER

July 17: *Masters of American Music: The Story of Jazz.* A documentary tracing the history of jazz from its beginnings in New Orleans through its development in the 1930s–1950s. **Admission:** free with museum admission. Sat 2 pm. Permanent exhibitions include an authentic 19th-century slave pen. **Admission:** $8–$12, children under 6 free. **Hours:** Tues–Sat 11 am–5 pm. 50 E. Freedom Way, downtown, (513) 333-7500.

NEWPORT AQUARIUM

July 1–31: *Bizarre & Beautiful.* A new exhibit of more than 20 of the world's strangest-looking aquatic species. View aquatic life from around the world with 70 exhibits, 14 galleries, and five

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seamless acrylic tunnels totaling more than 200 feet in length. **Admission:** $15–$22; free ages 12 and under with each paying adult during summer family hours Mon–Fri and Sun 4–7 pm. **Hours:** Mon–Sun 9 am–7 pm. 1 Levee Way, Newport, (859) 491-3467.

TAFT MUSEUM OF ART

Thru July 25: *Turner Watercolors from the Taft Collections.* Ten 19th-century European landscape watercolors by Joseph Mallord William Turner. **Thru Aug 8:** *TruthBeauty: Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845–1945.* An exhibition of 118 images document the century-long evolution of photography. **Admission:** adults $8, students and seniors $6, children under 18 free. Free admission Sundays. **Hours:** Wed–Sun 11 am–5 pm. 316 Pike St., downtown, (513) 241-0343.

CLASSICAL MUSIC/ OPERA

KENTUCKY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

July 10: *We've Got Your Bach.* Bring seating for outdoor amphitheater; picnics welcome. **Admission:** free; $5 donation suggested. Sat 7:30 pm. Devou Park, 1344 Audubon Rd., Covington, (859) 431-6216.

ANGELUS

July 11: A five-member young women's a cappella choir from Mt. Vernon Senior High School performs music ranging from medieval chants to contemporary Irish choral music. **Admission:** free. Sun 5 pm. Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E. Fourth St., downtown, (513) 621-1817.

DON'T MISS! WORLD PIANO COMPETITION

July 11–18: Young pianists perform classics, judged by an international jury. Check website for admission, performance times, and venues. www.cincinnatiwpc.org.

DON'T MISS! LA BOHÈME

July 21–25: Puccini's classic tale of love and loss in Paris performed in Italian. **Tickets:** $35–$130. Wed & Fri 7:30 pm, Sun 3 pm. Music Hall, 1241 Elm St., Over-the-Rhine, (513) 241-2742.

CINCINNATI POPS ORCHESTRA

July 31: *And the Tony Goes to... the Best of Broadway.* Maestro Randall Craig Fleischer presents familiar Broadway standards, with sopranos Debbie Gravitte and Christiane Noll, and tenor Doug LaBrecque. **Tickets:** $18–$47. Sat 8 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (513) 381-3300.

NIGHTLIFE

KEITH BENDER

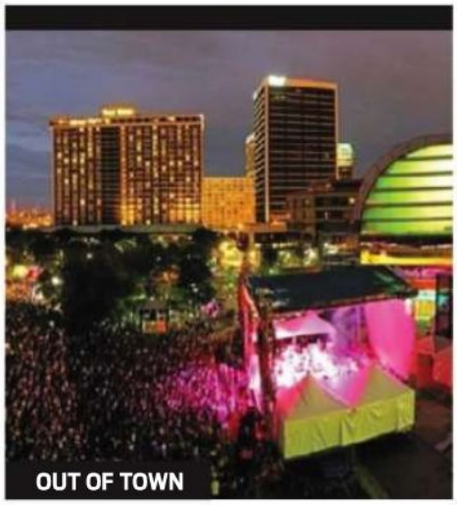
July 1–3: The 2005 winner of the "Funniest Person in Cincinnati" contest, this jokester's act is livened by creative voices and sound effects. **Tickets:** $8–$12. Thurs 8 pm, Fri & Sat 8 & 10:30 pm. Go Bananas Comedy Club, 8410 Market Place Ln., Montgomery, (513) 984-9288.

DANCE_MF

July 3: They call it a dance party and you're invited. **Cover:** free. Sat 10 pm. Northside Tavern, 4163 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 542-3603.

THE COMET BLUEGRASS ALLSTARS

July 4–25: CEA award-winning six-piece brassy bluegrass group performs as the Sunday night house band. **Cover:** free. Sun 7:30 pm. The Comet, 4579 Hamilton Ave., Northside, (513) 541-8900.



OUT OF TOWN

Freedom of Choice » Assuming you

can comfortably ignore the contradictions of something that began life as a totally free celebration of music, art, and activism that has transmogrified into a Ticketmaster-brokered event, there's a lot to like at Louisville's **Forecastle Festival.** The three-day pop smorgasbord fills its menu with more than 100 artists, including Gen X heroes The Flaming Lips, Drive-By Truckers, and Devo; indie faves Spoon and Minus the Bear; as well as local pickers The Tillers and Queen City big shots Foxy Shazam. As long as you mind the maxim regarding your eyes and the size of your stomach, you should be in for a treat. —CG HUDSON

JULY 9–11. WATERFRONT PARK, 300 E. RIVER RD., LOUISVILLE. CHECK WWW.FORECASTLEFEST.COM FOR LINEUP.

PARTY IN THE PARK

July 7 & 21: After-work drink specials and live bands. This month, hear 3 Day Rule and 4th Day Echo. **Cover:** free. Wed 5:30–10 pm. Yeatmans Cove, 805 Pete Rose Way, downtown, (513) 579-3100.

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW

July 10 & 24: Live actors perform in conjunction with a screening of the 1975 film. Got your toast? Your newspaper? Your toilet paper? Then you're ready for the audience-participation portion of the festivities. **Admission:** $6.75–$9.50. Sat midnight. Esquire Theatre, 320 Ludlow Ave., Clifton, (513) 281-8750.

BANDS/ CONCERTS

LPK ACOUSTIC LUNCH SERIES

Thru Sept 28: Lunchtime "unplugged" entertainment. This month, hear The Tillers, Wade Baker Collaboration, Jake Speed, and Acoustic Blue. **Admission:** free. Tues 11:45 am–1:45 pm. Piatt Park, One Garfield Place, downtown, (513) 381-3248.

DON'T MISS! NORTHSIDE ROCK 'N ROLL FESTIVAL

July 2 & 3: Indie-inspired fun includes live music, drag shows, circus performers, and a beer garden, plus the legendary Fourth of July parade on Hamilton Avenue. **Admission:** free. Fri 6 pm–1 am, Sat noon–1 am. Jacob Hoffner Park, 4101 Hamilton Ave., Northside, www.northsiderocks.com.

FOGHAT

July 3: Classic rock and rollers perform their hits like "Slow Ride" and "Fool for the City." **Tickets:** $25–$30. Sat 7 pm. Belterra Casino Resort & Spa, 777 Belterra Dr., Florence, (800) 745-3000.

BLUE ASH/MONTGOMERY SYMPHONY INDEPENDENCE DAY CONCERT

July 3: *Independence Day 1976!* A retrospective salute to the bicentennial of our nation's founding with patriotic marches and nostalgic songs made famous by Chicago, Earth, Wind and Fire, and other sounds from '76. **Admission:** free. Sat 7:30 pm. Montgomery Park, 10101 Montgomery Rd., Montgomery, (513) 232-0949.

MAXWELL

July 7: This R&B crooner pulled in two 2010 Grammy wins for his new album, *BLACKsummers'night.* **Tickets:** $49.50–$125. Wed 7 pm. Bank of Kentucky Center, Northern Kentucky University, 500 Nunn Dr., Highland Heights, (800) 745-3000.

LIMP BIZKIT

July 7: Supporting the 2010 release of *Gold Cobra,* the rocker quintet is still doing it all for the "nookie." **Tickets:** $43. Wed 7 pm. PNC Pavilion at Riverbend, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

RINGO STARR AND HIS ALL-STARR BAND

July 9: The iconic British drummer presents

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY U.S. BANK ARENA

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new songs with his revolving-door band mates, plus nostalgic hits from the Beatles' glory days. **Tickets:** $49.50–$125. Fri 8 pm. PNC Pavilion at Riverbend, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

WHO'S BAD

July 10: The self-dubbed "Ultimate Michael Jackson Tribute Band" recreates the King of Pop concert experience—crotch-grabbing and all. **Tickets:** $12. Sat 9 pm. Madison Theater, 730 Madison Ave, Covington, (859) 491-2444.

CHICAGO AND THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

July 13: Two groups of rock titans join forces to bring back their chart-topping hits from the past five decades. **Tickets:** $55–$89.50. Tues 7:30 pm. PNC Pavilion at Riverbend, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

July 15: Famed for feel-good hits like "Free Fallin' " and "I Won't Back Down," the six-member crew supports their new album, *Mojo*, released in June. **Tickets:** $43–$107. Thurs 7:30 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

THE MUSIC OF THE BEACH BOYS

July 17: Reminisce with the iconic, surfer-style American anthems of the '60s. **Tickets:** $18–$47. Sat 8 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (513) 381-3300.

BROOKS & DUNN

July 18: This country duo's bittersweet Last Rodeo tour concludes the 20-year partnership behind country staples like "Boot Scootin' Boogie" and "Red Dirt Road." **Tickets:** $23.50–$69.50. Sun 7:30 pm. PNC Pavilion at Riverbend, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

AN EVENING WITH STING

July 20: The pop-star beloved for a prolific career of awesomely '80s ballads, movie theme songs, countless awards, and activism plays to loyal fans in collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra. **Tickets:** $94–$159. Tues 8 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

DON'T MISS! LIGHTNING BOLT

July 21: The thrashing, chaotic noise duo's concerts are raging with moshing and head-banging. **Tickets:** $8–$10. Wed 9:30 pm. The Southgate House, 24 E. Third St., Newport, (859) 431-2201.

ROCKSTAR ENERGY DRINK MAYHEM FESTIVAL

July 21: A hardcore rock extravaganza including Korn, Rob Zombie, Hatebreed, and Winds of Plague. (Leave your Polo shirt at home.) **Tickets:** $25–$69.50. Wed 2:15 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

JOHN MAYER

July 27: It's been nearly 10 years since the dreamy-voiced songwriter first wooed us with "No Such Thing," and has continued to win hearts with singles like "Daughters" and "Waiting on the World to Change." **Tickets:** $36–$69.50. Tues 7 pm. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

VANS WARPED TOUR

July 28: Notorious for inciting punk-fueled shenanigans, this year's annual summertime tour stages We the Kings, Haste the Day, and Sum 41. **Tickets:** $33.50–$40. Wed noon. Riverbend Music Center, 6295 Kellogg Ave., Anderson Twp., (800) 745-3000.

MACY'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

July 30 & 31: An R&B collaboration including Charlie Wilson, Teena Marie, and En Vogue. **Tickets:** $48–$88. Paul Brown Stadium, One Bengals Dr., downtown, (800) 745-3000.

THEATER

COTTONPATCH GOSPEL

July 7–20: The Gospel is presented in a rural Georgia setting with country music. **Tickets:** $16–$17. Call for times. Showboat Majestic, 435 E. Mehring Way, downtown, (513) 241-6550.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

July 18, 21, 24, & 31: Shakespeare's magical comedy of Athenian lovers, an amateur acting group, and supernatural characters. Performed at different outdoor venues throughout the region. Presented by Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. **Admission:** free. All shows begin at 7 pm. For location information, visit www.cincyshakes.com

HAMLET

July 23, 28, & 30: Shakespeare's tragic tale of the prince of Denmark. Performed at different outdoor venues throughout the region. Presented by Cincinnati Shakespare Company. **Admission:** free. All shows begin at 7 pm. For location information, visit www.cincyshakes.com.

LES MISERABLES

July 23–Aug 1: The epic tale of perseverance in 19th-century France. **Tickets:** $12–$20. Wed–Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 & 8 pm. Covedale Center for the Performing Arts, 4990 Glenway Ave., Price Hill, (513) 241-6550.

COMMON THREADS

July 29 & 30: A contemporary drama based on a man's battle with kidney disease. Presented by DJK Productions, Inc. **Tickets:** $20. Thurs & Fri 8 pm. Cincinnati Art Museum, 953 Eden Park Dr., Eden Park, (888) 327-2138.

KID STUFF

CLUB AQUA

Thru Aug 10: The Beach's teens-only outdoor

OUT OF TOWN

We Must Repeat » "I've got a

rhyme that comes in a riddle / O-Hi-O! / What's round on the ends and high in the middle? / O-Hi-O!" If you recognize those lines as part of a bridge the band Devo occasionally would add to live versions of their 1977 B-side release "Jocko-Homo," it's your duty to haul your tail-less posterior up I-71 to the Ohio Historical Center (OHC) in Columbus. Apparently out of sheer love for their home state ("Auto Modown," anyone?) Devo recently donated precious memorabilia—vintage stickers, a yellow jumpsuit, and an official replica of the red "Energy Domes" famously featured in the "Whip It" video (see above for a refresher)—to the OHC for the show *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are DEVO!* As an official Devo-tee, you'll be happy to know that the collection also includes a copy of B.H. Shadduck's 1924 anti-Darwin pamphlet "Jocko-Homo Heavenbound," which, in turn, inspired a young band to write a song in which teachers and critics all "dance the poot." OK, let's go!

—BRENT DONALDSON

THRU AUGUST 31. THURSDAYS 10 AM–7 PM, FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS 10 AM–5 PM. ADMISSION: ADULTS $8, CHILDREN (AGE 6–12) $4, CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE. OHIO HISTORICAL CENTER, 1982 VELMA AVE., COLUMBUS, (614) 297-2300, WWW.OHIOHISTORY.ORG

PHOTOGRAPH BY JULES BATES/ARTROUBLE

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Cover Me

Fiber artist Carolyn Mazloomi pieces together jazz and quiltmaking in a show that must be seen to be heard.

BY KATHY Y. WILSON

While **Carolyn Mazloomi** promotes black quiltmakers' legacies, this activist/author isn't cloistered within the artistic community. Mazloomi, whose work is collected in the Smithsonian, is too busy traveling to places like Ghana studying textiles and coordinating the Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN), which she founded in 1985. Under its auspices, she's curated *Textural Rhythms: Constructing the Jazz Tradition—African American Quilts,* currently on display at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

What kind of name is Mazloomi? Where does it come from? I'm married for 30 years to an Iranian. Originally, we lived in Los Angeles. We moved here from Los Angeles with our three small sons. It's been different but we survived. I wanted to come to Ohio to raise my sons.

You specifically chose Ohio? [Laughs.] I didn't want to raise my sons in L.A. Cincinnati is a good place to raise kids.

That's what they say. Is quilting a skill and talent handed down or taught in your family? By profession, I'm an engineer and I taught myself quilting. It was a hobby and it turned into something else.

What's the connection between jazz and quilting? I don't think the average person would align those two things. The show is beyond smokin'. If you love jazz, you can see it, you can feel it. Each artist has taken their favorite jazz song or their favorite jazz musician and made a piece to honor it. *Textural Rhythms* jumps off the wall.

You're the founder and coordinator of WCQN. What made you know it was time to organize and promote women of color quilters? Because I could see where the work was highly collectible but the people that made the work did not know the monetary value or the cultural significance of quilting and they got ripped off. I got tired of seeing that. We have to have a legacy. There's nobility and honor in things that are made by hand.

Americans even remotely familiar with quilting think of Gee's Bend. What do quilts mean culturally and historically to blacks? When you look at a quilt, it's like looking at a historical document. It looks into the family. There are pictorial quilts that are preferred by African-Americans. They are articles of historical importance because they're part of our history. I like that we can look at a quilt and glean some knowledge about who we are.

I love that you love quilts enough to care for them, to promote them correctly, and make sure they're taken seriously. Exactly. We have to leave something behind. That's my mantra.

THRU AUG 14. ADMISSION: $8–$12. TUES–SAT 11 AM–5 PM. NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREEDOM CENTER, 50 E. FREEDOM WAY, DOWNTOWN, (513) 333-7500.

dance club. **Admission:** $8–$12. Tues 9 am–midnight. The Beach Waterpark, 2590 Waterpark Dr., Mason, (513) 398-7946.

CREATION MUSEUM PETTING ZOO

July 1–31: Come see a variety of animal kinds, including a zonkey, a zorse, and wallabies. **Admission:** adults $21.95, seniors $16.95, ages 5-12 $11.95 (included with museum admission). Mon–Fri 10:30 am–8 pm, Sat 9:30 am–6 pm, Sun noon–6 pm. Creation Museum, 2800 Bullittsburg Church Rd., Petersburg, Kentucky, (888) 582-4253

THURSDAY ART PLAY

July 1–29: Art-related activities in the UnMuseum for children ages 3–7 and their caregivers. This month's themes: Celebrate America's Birthday; Misfit Toys; Soft Sculptures; Mirror, Mirror on the Wall; Totally Totes; Gardening Fun. **Admission:** free for CAC members; $7.50 adults and $4.50 children nonmembers. Thurs 1–2 pm. Contemporary Arts Center, 44 E. Sixth St., downtown, (513) 345-8400.

THE AMAZING PORTABLE CIRCUS' MAGIC MONDAYS

July 5: Stilt walkers, jugglers, fire-eaters, beautiful girls spinning high in the air, this circus also boasts the best balloon animal making in the western hemisphere. Let your little one be the judge! **Admission:** free. Mon 7:308:30 pm. Essex Studios, 2511 Essex Pl., Walnut Hills, (513) 921-5454.

ZOO TALES

July 6–27: Families hear stories, sing songs, and meet costumed characters. July 6: Curious George. July 13: Clifford. July 20: Maisy. July 27: Berenstain Bears. **Admission:** free with Zoo admission. Tues 10:30 am. Wings of Wonder Theater, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, 3400 Vine St., Avondale, (513) 281-4700.

NICKELODEON PRESENTS STORYTIME LIVE!

July 7 & 8: A musical presentation of four preschool show favorites: Dora the Explorer, The Backyardigans, Wonder Pets, and Ni Hao, Kailan. **Tickets:** $12.50–$35. Wed 4 & 7 pm, Thurs 10:30 am & 7 pm. Procter & Gamble Hall, Aronoff Center for the Arts, 650 Walnut St., downtown, (800) 745-3000.

CURIOUS GEORGE

July 10–18: All aboard the Lebanon Mason Monroe Railroad for a ride with the cantankerous monkey. **Tickets:** $8.50–$18.50. Sat & Sun 10 am, 12:15 pm, 2:30 pm, & 4:45. 127 S. Mechanic St., Lebanon, (513) 933-8022.

CINCINNATI MAGAZINE, (ISSN 0746-8 210), July 2010, Volume 43, Number 10. Published monthly, except for June, which has two issues—$15 for 13 issues annually—at Carew Tower, 441 Vine St., Suite 200, Cincinnati, OH 45202-2039. (513) 421-4300. Copyright © 2010 by Emmis Publishing LP, a subsidiary of Emmis Communications, Inc., 40 Monument Circle, Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46204. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced or reprinted without permission. Unsolicited manuscripts, photographs and artwork should be accompanied by SASE for return. The magazine cannot be held responsible for loss. For back issue orders, write to CINCINNATI MAGAZINE, Back Issues Department, Carew Tower, 441 Vine St., Suite 200, Cincinnati, OH 45202-2039. For subscription orders, address changes or renewals, write to CINCINNATI MAGAZINE, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235, or call 1-800-846-4333. Periodicals postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Please send forms 3579 to CINCINNATI MAGAZINE, Carew Tower, 441 Vine St., Suite 200, Cincinnati, OH 45202-2039. If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year.

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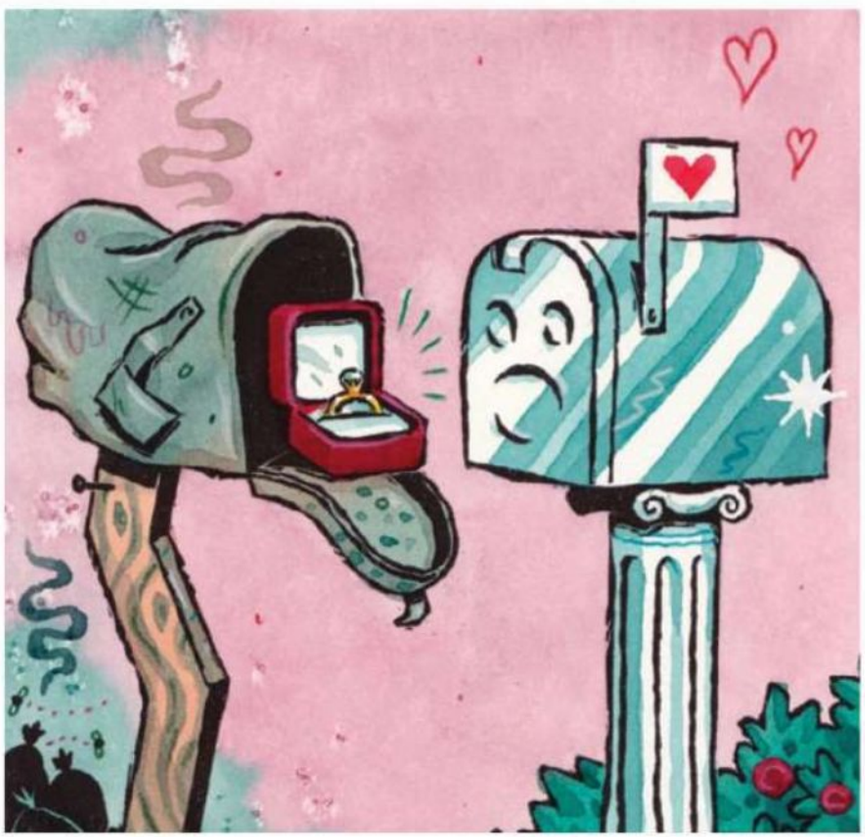
Slumdog ♥ Millionaire

Can a part of town from the right part of town find love with a part of town from the wrong part of town?



Beeep.

—Mt. Adams? You there? Mt. Adams, if you're there, pick up. It's me, Oakley. I've got news. Huge news. Unbelievable—

—H'llo?

—I *knew* you were there. Why didn't you answer? You sound hungover.

—I'm Mt. Adams. I was born hungover.

—Right. Whatever. So, you talked to Hyde Park lately?

—Hyde Park? Nah. That stuck-up upscale uptight upper-cruster wouldn't spray me with her fountain if I was on fire.

—So you don't know about her and Lower Price Hill?

—Know...?

—That they're...together.

—The Land of Grandin Road Grandiosity and Appalachia on Eighth Street? Together? I don't think so.

—Swear.

—Uh-huh. And West Chester's entered a 12-step program for its addiction to retail development and every subwoofer in Fay Apartments is a-rumblin' with Perry Como and...

—No, seriously: Miss Manor's got it bad for the cracker barrio. Been hooking up with him for weeks, creeping across Vine after dark, thinking the whole city's asleep and nobody sees her. But I'm a lot hipper 'hood than I used to be; lotsa nights I'm up till 10:30, 11 o'clock.

—You're *so* uptown, Oakley girl.

—And butting up against her like I do, I can always tell—or should I say smell—when she's been with him, 'cause she *reeks* of environmental injustice, fresh-sprayed graffiti, and—talk about sad—Milwaukee's Best.

—Yuck!

—Yeah.

—You don't think she's letting him, um, you know...

—Into her Square? What do *you* think?

—Isn't she afraid of catching a Section 8 Housing Transmitted Disease?

—Isn't *he* afraid that after a night with *her* he'll wake up covered in "Reelect Jean Schmidt" signs?

—Ewww! Stop. Now that picture's stuck in my head.

—None of that matters though since—and this is why I called—they're getting *married.*

—You're. Kidding.

—Not kidding. At least, that's the rumor Indian Hill—Hyde Park's ex-boyfriend?—is spreading.

—Ex-boyfriend? Isn't Indian Hill gay?

—Oh, hell yeah. Just don't tell *him.* So anyway, yeah, married. The groom's supposedly giving the bride a 10.5-acre ring of brownfields with contaminated soil that he's been saving for just this day. And as a wedding gift? Guess what *she* promised *him?* Gentrification!

—Ha! Well, who knows? Maybe they'll make it work.

—Right, Mt. Adams. And you've got ample off-street parking.

—Ouch, Oakley. For such a nice neighborhood, you can sure be a bitch.

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM McCAULEY

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SEE AMERICA

9 great exhibitions, 280 programs, one art museum, one amazing summer in Eden Park.

[Pabst Blue Ribbon Sign, Chicago, Illinois,] 1946. © Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

July 10 and 11 Sounds of America: A Tapestry of Music & Song. Bluegrass to jazz to classical.

July 10 and 11 American Musicals Movie Marathon. We'll show four classic films.

July 25 Classic American Car Road Rally. With Concours d'Elegance and Jeff Wyler Automotive Family; broadcast live on WNKU from the Art Museum from 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

August 14 Take Me Out: Playing in America. An All-American cookout with games, live music, a big-screen live broadcast of the Reds game, corn hole, a board game competition and more.

cincinnatiartmuseum.org

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Pictured left to right: Kip Heekin, Monica Moore, Joel Stone, David Hummel, Kelley Jensen.

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